The Magazine for Golden Age, Silver Age & Bronze Age Collectors

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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December 1998

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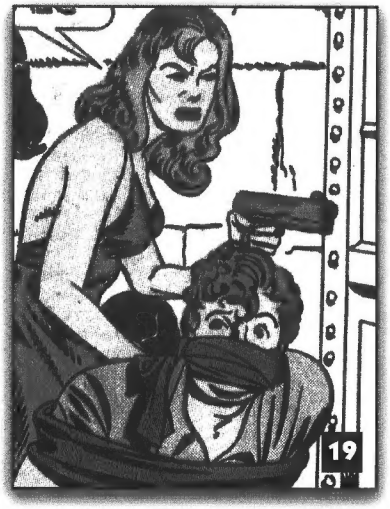

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SPECIAL THANKS to Arnie Sawyer & Rob Rogovin for help with this month's cover; David Grisez for the loan of his crime collection; and Jon McClure, David Krell, and Cliff Wiener for research and pricing data.

Riddle of the Solo Batman!

In the early '60s, the earliest Batman books we'd been able to find were *Detective* #40 and *Batman* #2. Then one fateful fall day, we handed Morn three months worth of hard-earned lawn mowing money. We were too young to write checks ourselves, so she dutifully made one out for us for $37.

We placed the plain green check in an envelope along with our hand-scrawled letter. "Dear Mr. Rogofsky" it started. (How could we know that Howard was only 16 at the time)" ...here is $35 for the Batman #1 you had in your last list. If you still have it please send it to us. We are also sending $2 for postage. Please wrap it so that the postman cannot hurt it while it is in the mail. Thank you, Gary & Lane Carter." What seemed an eternity (four weeks) went by. Every day after school we ran to the post office to see if our package had arrived... and every day our inquiries were met with disappointment.

Then a postal clerk (who by now knew us by our first names) said "this came for you boys... looks like they sent it to Colorado by mistake." They had. Howard's typing had been strategically smudged by a water stain, transforming "Coronado" in "Colorado." Not only that, but the package was not insured and the lower right corner of the manila mailing envelope had been torn off... exposing Batman's blue boot framed in a ragged triangle of red and yellow.

We didn't care... we were ecstatic! Right there on the PO counter we lifted the flap, slid the tattered book out, and began to carefully thumb through the pages of our long-awaited treasure. To our young eyes, the book was beautiful and contained a retelling of Batman's origin, two Joker stories, a Catwoman story, and a "Meet The Artist" text page starring Bob Kane.

But there was another story (with villain Hugo Strange) that sent us into total disbelief! Incredible... unbelievable... "where... where's... Robin??" I asked Lane in amazement. "There's no Robin in the story... Batman's all by himself!"

A solo Batman was unthinkable to two young Silver Age fans like us... fans who only knew of a dynamic DUO! Of course we later learned that, indeed, the Caped Crusader did star in a dozen solo stories... we just hadn't been exposed to the idea until that fateful day in the Coronado post office. As the months and years went by, we were eventually able to find the early Batman *Detectives*, and I loved the great solo stories they contained. But I could never figure out why the first issue of *Batman* had one of these solo adventures when it supposedly hit the stands after *Tec* 38! Years passed, comic conventions started, fandom got "organized," and we upgraded *Bat* #1 several times. More time passed... the "new look" dynamic duo took over *Detective Comics*, Batman came and went on TV, and I grew up and went to college.

Then one day while attending a convention in the mid '70s, a neatly dressed gentleman tapped me on the shoulder. He politely said "Excuse me son, I'm trying to find a copy of *Batman* #1 for a friend of mine, and a dealer told me you have one for sale. By the way, my name is Bob Kane." Without a moment's hesitation I retorted "I'm awfully glad to meet you Mr. Kane. There's something I've always wanted to ask you... why was there a solo Batman story in *Batman* #1?"

Bob chuckled, then dutifully explained "That's simple... they used the story originally scheduled for *Detective* #38... the one that was displaced by Robin's intro!" His simple yet elegant explanation was an epiphany! Of course... that's the answer. Bob was also amazed and just a bit proud when he learned that our dupe copy of *Batman* #1 was priced at a whopping $275! Regrettably, that brief ten minute conversation was the only time I ever spoke with the legendary Mr. Kane.

Bob's gone now... and so are the answers to a thousand unanswered Batman questions. But I'll always remember that one occasion when I had the privilege of meeting one of comic history's true luminaries... and solving the "Riddle of the Solo Batman."

Gary

Gary M. Carter

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

EDITOR
Gary M.Carter

ART DIRECTOR
Lisa M.Carter

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Pat S. Calhoun

MARKET REPORT COORDINATOR
Michael Naiman

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Scotty Moore • Phil Barnhart

COPY EDITORS
Beth Holley • Amanda Kitzmiller

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Betty McChesney • Mick Rabin

OFFICE & SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Amanda Kitzmiller

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS
Joe McGuckin • Mike Wilbur

MAGAZINE CONSULTANTS
Joe Sikoryak • Bill Howard

TECHNICAL CONSULTANTS
Mark Haynes • Arnie Sawyer

MARKETING DIRECTOR
J. C. Vaughn

GEMSTONE WEBSITE
www.gemstonepub.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS AND ARTISTS
Murphy Anderson • Jon Berk • Christian Blees
Arnold T. Blumberg • Bob Brodsky
Steve Carey • Paul Castiglia • John Clements
John Coates • Ray Connell • J. Keith Contarino
Gary Colabuono • Joe Desris • Tony Didio
Duane Dimock • Creig Flessel
Fabio Gadducci • Jeff Gelb • Stephen Gentner
Rolf Gerdau • Tony Gleeson • Bruce Hamilton
Roger Hill • Richard Holley • Bill Jenks
Peter Klee • Patrick Kochanek • Mark Magarity
Jon McClure • Lou Mougin • Will Murray
Michelle Nolan • Myls Putnam • Benn Ray
Gene Reed • Steve Ringgenberg
Matt Schiffman • Arlen Schumer • Todd Severin
Craig Shutt • Steve Sibra • Jon Signorelli
Tony Starks • Mike Tiefenbacher • Roy Thomas
James Van Hise • Jason Versaggi
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Ditko said it

Jim Brocius wondered in CBM #64 where Steve Ditko said in print that he created Spider-Man's costume. Answer: In his eye-opening and little publicized article, "Jack Kirby's Spider-Man: An Insider's View." (Robin Snyder's History of Comics #5, May, 1990). In it, Ditko recounts how he "inherited" the unfinished Kirby Spider-Man strip and the changes he made. It's a fascinating account, all the more so because Ditko sketches his conception of Spider-Man's costume, along side his recollection of the Kirby version. It looks like a cross between Captain America and Ant-Man!

Unfortunately, the issue is long out of print, but subs to the renamed "The Comics" are still available. $24 brings you twelve great issues, from Robin Snyder, 2284 Yew St. #B6, Bellingham, WA 98226-8899. Recommended.

No sooner had CBM published my article "Roots of the Superman (CBM #63) talking about appearances of the term "superhero" that predated Superman, than Les Daniels' wonderful book "Superman" saw print. Therein is printed a 1936 Joe Shuster sketch I had never before seen. Showing various cameo images of the yet-published Man of Steel, it was riddled with prophetic lines like "The Super-Strip of Them All" and the one I wish had had known about when I penned my piece: "The Greatest Super-Hero of All Time!" I guess the word was in the air at that time.

The CBM Superman issue also reminded me of a rare collector's item I spotted at a convention years ago: A syndicate placard for the then-new Superman strip. It showed an early Shuster Superman pose. The fascinating thing was this: the character was so new, the syndicate colorists had no idea he had an official color scheme. So they showed him bare-legged and bare-chested (the sketchy S was barely visible, and looked like a fading chest tattoo) while he wore brown trunks and a green cape. I think the gladiator boots were brown, too!

Will Murray, Massachusetts

Joe Simon writes

I am happy to have met you—finally—at the ComicCon in San Diego. You and your staff did a fabulous job (as usual) on Comic Book Marketplace #62. It was the highlight for me. My thanks and best regards to all the terrific people I met in your booth and beyond—thanks again.

Joe Simon, New York

Shelly Moldoff reminisces

Your Comic Book Marketplace issue covering "Superman's 60th" was well done—you touched all bases! My professional career began then with a page in Action #1. That means I am celebrating my 60th year in comics—hard to believe—but time stops for no man—including Superman.

Your article brought back memories... one that I remember was standing in the office of National Periodicals at 480 Lexington Avenue in New York City... and watching groups of school children being brought in and walked through the offices... then walked past artists, editors, writers etc. etc... and how the children all stared up at the huge painting of Superman on the wall... it was awesome... and the youngsters just stared.

Superman followed by Batman... and an industry was born.

Keep up the good work. May there always be a place for comic books. Sincerely,

Shelly Moldoff, Florida

Such a strong reaction!

CBM #63 was well worth waiting for. I would LOVE to see an article on the French Superman-Blue Beetle identity change. I also greatly enjoyed Pat Calhoun's article! THANK YOU very VERY much for another fascinating issue. How do you do it time after time? You're quite a wonder! My CBMs make my New York subway commute a joy!

As for CBM #64, it is exciting and amusing to read such a strong reaction (CBM #64) to my concept of Superman as an Israeli war god. I am a bit baffled, however. I really do not understand what Bob Pujol finds so "offensive and insulting." Is it the idea that Superman is a Jew? Nah, I'm sure it's nothing so racist. And what is this curious comment of Pujol's—"he cannot claim their creations are 'theirs'"? Gee, whatever can THAT mean?

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Say… Pujol, Pujol. Hmm. Is that a Jewish name? In any event, it's always delightful to get a heartfelt response to one's work, so thanks, Bob Pujol.

And if I understand you correctly, Bob, and you are upset to hear that Superman is a Jew, I hope the recent DNA tests that proved Thomas Jefferson had black children doesn't elevate your blood pressure too much (just kidding… all in good fun, eh, bubbe?).

But more seriously (well, slightly more), as my Irish pal, Mike Mosher, sometime writer for the Comics Journal, points out—the EARLY history of the newspaper comic STRIPS is distinctively IRISH in tone. A huge majority of early strip creators were Irish. Now, does the revelation that Maggie & Jiggs were Celtic offend anyone? Hmm. I feel another article coming on!!!

It was all in good fun, people!!! All right?

I particularly enjoyed CBM #64, especially the article on fan legend Bill Schelly (hmm.. Schelly, Schelly… I wonder if—oh, never mind).

CBM gets better each issue! Keep it going! Peace and goodbye!

Link Yaco, New York

Scarce Actions!

Wanted to write to tell you how much I enjoyed your latest issue (#63). I've been a faithful reader since the day I walked into Rocket Comics in Seattle and spotted Steve Sibra reading issue #3.

Michelle Nolan's article about 1950's Actions was fascinating. I don't get to as many conventions as she does, but I have similar impressions about the scarcity of certain issues. The most difficult numbers for me to obtain have been #201-217. Issues #140-200 are also difficult but do seem to turn up a little more often. Of the 20 issues she lists as being most difficult to obtain, I have managed to get 8 over the last 10 years: #178's "The Sandman of Crime", #180's "The Super Telethon", #188's "The Spectral Superman", #195's "Lois Lane-Wanted", #200's "Test of a Warrior", #203's "The International Daily Planet", #219's "Superman's Treasure Hoard" and #230's "Superman Loses His Powers". Of these I enjoyed #178 the most. #200 gets the award for "least awe inspiring cover."

I'd be interested in yours and Michelle's opinions about common issues in the 1950's run. Action #230 makes Michelle's list of scarcest issues, however I have not one but three copies of it (OK, so one is coverless and one is 3/4 cover). I have a couple of copies of #223 ("The First Superman of Krypton") and also have three copies of #236 (coverless, poor and good) and still see these issues for sale fairly regularly. I don't think the Actions from this time period are any more difficult to obtain than the Superman or Adventure issues from the same period.

I tend to try to fill in my runs by working backward from the lowest number that I already have, and my Action, Adventure and Superman collections all develop gaps at about the same time-1955. I don't know if the early '50's Actions sold only half as well as Superman. I would guess that sales were closer than that when comparing the two titles. I'll have to look back at the 1960's sales figures but I don't recall that they were that much different.

I agree that the 1950's Adventures were better than the Actions. What about a similar article about Adventure? As long as I'm in the suggesting mood, a review of the heroes called up by Kid Eternity in the pages of Hit and Kid Eternity might be interesting. Some of the heroes seem rather obscure (at least to this non-history major). Is there a story about how they were selected?

Although I am not a true Classics Comics collector, I try to add to my set of The World Around Us when it's convenient. Many of my issues have a letter in a circle stamped on the cover. What is the meaning of this? Maybe a Classics collector out there could educate me. Thanks for a great magazine.

Herb Cushing, Indiana

German editors

Yesterday I received my copy of CBM #63. I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciated your accurate editing of my text—I wish German editors (for which I'm normally write) would take such pains with my articles! Thank you very much and keep up your great work. Kindest regards,

Christian Blees, Germany

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Pleased to say that a day after I sent you a wondering E-mail about the upcoming issue (#63), I received it in the mail, and it looks great. You even printed a letter from me… I'm abashed. Regarding that letter, I should have added that the Overstreet Guide recommends the

Some Back Issues are still available...

#44 Wally Wood, Amaz. Fantasy #16
#46 Atomic Genre, Pre-Code Horror, etc.
#47 Russ Heath, World of DC War
#48 Nick Cardy, Shuster, National Comics
#50 Julie Schwartz, Big Bang Theory, etc.
#52 Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox
#53 Pre-Code Horror, Spicy Pulps, DC's Tangled Roots, Feldstein and Evans
#55 Superman vs. Big Red Cheese, Skywald Horror, Fawcett's Nickel
#56 Denny O'Neil, Adams, and Shadow
#57 Legion of Super-Heroes, Curt Swan!
#60 Planet Comics, Blackhawk, R. Crandall
#61 Stan Lee, Spider-Man, and Romance
#62 Joe Simon, Fighting American
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100-point scale system, which allows us to stick to the basic grades, and stay away from multiple grades or plusses and minuses. Of course, getting dealers to use this 100 point scale is the trick....

Thanks for the issue...the Superman focus is a good idea. Perhaps a future issue can focus on another long-time superhero. I would also like to see the someone critically assess the Crisis on Infinite Earths/Zero Hour restructuring, which some of us feel was an unmitigated, unnecessary disaster....

Eric Martin, via E-mail

Overshadowed the articles

Although I was very eagerly anticipating CBM #63 for the tribute to Superman, the letter from artist Steve Ditko in the Marketplace Mail section overshadowed the articles within to be all but forgotten.

I write this letter with a very heavy heart, because my father recently passed on October 2, just over a year since my mother died from a heart attack. My parents' passing helps to spur me on in this last plea to Mr. Ditko to come forth and speak to fandom about his magnificent career by doing an in-depth interview with Comic Book Marketplace.

Life will not go on forever for any of us, I'm sure that we are all aware. Please, Mr. Ditko, don't wait until it's too late and we never get your full account on your artistic career. Please contact Gary Carter at CBM and schedule an interview. All of us associated with the comic book hobby love and respect you and your achievements. Please talk to us. Sincerely,

John Mlachnik, Minnesota

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DC Westerns

Thanks for sending me the copy of CBM #61 so quickly. I missed it while I was away on vacation this summer. The article by Michelle Nolan on western comics was great. As I've written before, my interest in this genre was piqued awhile back and to learn a little more is great. One thing though, Michelle seems to have have overlooked the contributions of her favorite publisher, DC, to this genre. On "Kid" western heroes, DC had the Wyoming Kid who appeared in Western Comics for its entire 85 issue run. Other long running DC Western heroes include Johnny Thunder (All-American #100-126, All-Star Western #67-119, [80 issues total]), the Trigger Twins (All-Star Western #58-115 [58 issues total]), and Pow-Wow Smith (Detective Comics #151-#202, Western Comics #43-85), plus others like Nighthawk and Strong Bow. Keep up the great work.

Mark Billian, via E-mail

Dropped the color

The horror of it all... I love every page of the Superman tribute in issue #63! To my horror, I found that the color was dropped from the second half of the Wayne Boring section through page 49! All the copies sent to the comic store I shop at (I like to support local business) were the same way. I will gladly pay to get a copy without this printing error. Do you have any? Please let me know as soon as possible.

Also, thank you for printing my letter (the second you have printed). It is a thrill to see my words in your fine publication (especially a super keen issue like #63)... Sincerely,

Greg Westphal, Massachusetts

Well Greg, you did not get a defective issue... we just ran out of color pages! We were faced with either cutting some of the art, or transitioning part of it to b&w pages. You weren't the only one who was worried as we received several letters and phone calls inquiring about "misprinted color pages." If everybody would just buy two or three copies of each issue we could double or even triple the number of color pages in each issue! I can dream can't I?

British Superman Annuals

Just re-read "Those Wonderful British Superman Annuals" (CBM #63)... and spotted a small error. In paragraph four the date should read 1955-56 not 1954-55... sorry... do you think anyone will notice? Thought I'd let you know before an eagle-eyed reader wrote in...

Jim Kealy, London, England

Bugged me for quite some time

Have been collecting for 40 years and am trying to finish the first 100 issues of Action Comics between paying two mortgages, etc. I love your magazine (have all the current run); for a Golden Age collector and avid comics fan it's great!

Gary, I have a question concerning CBM that has bugged me for quite some time. I have the first run of CBM (I believe it has paper covers) that ran 21 issues plus an annual? I was a subscriber and when that folded I received issue #22 with the Sub-Mariner cover which is the current run. I also have 21 issues of CBM (becomes "Monthly" with issue #3) that has glossy covers and is more of a price guide than article-oriented magazine.

My question is this, are these last 21 issues the precursor of the current run or are the paper cover issues the precursor? Could you perhaps give me some sort of timeline to follow. Thank you in advance, you've got a fan for life.

Steve Jacobs, via E-mail.

I've gotten this question a number of times. To begin, the "paper covers" were on the original CBM #1-14. With #15 we switched to "slick covers" and those lasted until the first run ended with #21. Then I went to work for Bob Overstreet and he wanted to use the name (initially anyway) so we started up his new magazine as Overstreet's Comic Book Marketplace and it kept that title for a few issues. Bob later decided to change the "marketplace" to "monthly" after the first couple of issues. At any rate the confusion usually arises from the fact that there were 21 of Overstreet's Comic Book Marketplace/Monthly and 21 issues of the original CBM run. The second incarnation of CBM is a continuation of the original run not the Overstreet Monthly.

The "annual" is really CBM Special #1 which reprints selected materials from issue #7-14 and recycles the cover of CBM #14. Also, instead of 80 pages the special only has 52). Thank you for your kind words regarding CBM.

Boring correction

As usual, you guys outdid yourselves with your truly wonderful tribute to Superman in issue #63. You actually managed to bring to light some still-unexplored areas of Superman history after 60+ years of scrutiny! Kudos!

However, glad as I am to see Wayne Boring finally get some attention, I have a correction to make—Boring's last Superman story was not in 1984, but in 1986 (post-Crisis!). Specifically, in the first issue of "Secret Origins," featuring a retelling of the origin of the "Earth-2" Superman. Jerry Ordway inked over Boring's pencils and the results were gorgeous.

I always enjoyed the cover to that issue, as Dr. Fate uses his crystal ball to show the JSA the famous scene from the cover of Action #1. The graying Superman holds his head and winces, as if thinking, "Was I really like that? How embarrassing!" Just think how embarrassed he'd have been if the JSA learned of his French career under the name "Francis the Unbeatable!"

David Morefield, Virginia

Far cry from a comic book

Hate to burst letter-writer John Mlachnik's bubble, but Young Klondike #1, pictured on page 9 of CBM #63 is a far cry from a comic book. It has more in common with a paperback book than it does a comic book. From John's description, it's a story paper of which thousands were published from around 1840 until they were replaced by pulp magazines in the early part of the twentieth century. Many of these story papers featured cover layouts similar to that found on Young Klondike #1, often featuring two or more colors.

Story papers were relatives of the dime novel where readers could partake in the fictional exploits of characters (some based on actual persons) such as Buffalo Bill, Deadwood Dick, Jesse James, the Liberty Boys of 1776, Nick Carter, and many more. Some of the story papers and dime novels evolved directly into pulp magazines such as The Argosy, Wild West Weekly, or Detective Story Magazine while others simply folded, killed off by the competition of pulp magazines such as The Popular Magazine or Adventure.

At one time, story papers and dime novels were quite sought after. Their collectibility diminished when the generation that remembered them began to die off. There are still diehard collectors who hunt for story papers and dime novels, but their numbers are much diminished.

If your readers want to learn more about story papers and their dime novel relatives, there's probably no better place to go than Dime Novel Round-Up, edited by J. Randolph Cox, PO Box 226, Dundas, MN 55019. Unlike pulp magazines which have a number of fanzines devoted to them, including my own Purple Prose, Cox's publication is pretty much the lone entry in its field.

Mike Chomko, Pennsylvania

Thanks Arlen & Sherri

Enjoyed "The Art History of Superman" color section by Arlen Schumer and color art of Sherri Wolfgang. If possible, it would be nice to have "The Graphic History of Batman Words & Pictures Batman Retrospective" by Arlen Schumer in a future of CBM. Loved "The Art History of Superman" format. CBM #63 was worth this particular color section.

Also, the book "Comics Between the Panels" by Steve Duin and Mike Richardson is a great reference book for any collector. I see you ran a full page ad for it.

Each month your CBM is, has and will always be my greatest enjoyment. Now how about an all-Batman issue?! Thanks.

Mad Mona, Texas

I thought Arlen & Sherri did a wonderful job too… as for Batman, one never knows what surprises are just around the corner in CBM.

Comic Book Artist

Thank you very much for a fine presentation of my "Fantastic Fanzines" article in CBM #64. I hope folks had as much fun reading it as I had writing it. There was an unfortunate, and by no means intentional, exclusion, however. Inexplicably, there was some confusion and the paragraph I wrote about the new zine called Comic Book Artist was not included in the final draft submitted. Suffice to say, the first issue of Comic Book Artist hit the stands April 1998 and a second issue has since appeared. Like CBM, CBA devotes itself to "the old stuff because frankly, it's simply better." Published by TwoMorrows (publishers of The Jack Kirby Collector), its sole focus is the work itself, with no interest in collector values or comics as investments. Even more interesting is the fact that they've revived and incorporated Alter Ego into its pages, the back cover (when turned upside- down) serving as its cover. Roy Thomas returns as A/E's editor, and naturally enough, Bill Schelly serves as Contributing Editor. For the sake of those who find inspiration and entertainment in the comics and fanzines of yore, I couldn't let this pass. Thanks, again,

Mark Burbey, via E-mail

No notice or fanfare!

Just a quick note about #64, the "freak teams" issue. I really enjoyed the issue overall, but a small error in the "X-Men… The Lost Years!" article leaped out at my obsessive-compulsive researcher side. Writer Rich Donnelly did an admirable and entertaining job compiling the odyssey of the between-books X-Men, but overlooked one significant story.

The Angel solo story written by Superman co-creator, Jerry Siegel, was, in fact, a 3-part story, not a 2-part story as Donnelly reported. Part 1 appeared in Ka-Zar King-Size #2 (Dec 1970). Ka-Zar King-Size #3 (Mar 1971) featured Part 2, not part 1 as indicated by Donnelly. Marvel Tales #30 (Apr 1971) featured concluding Part 3, not Part 2.

It's also interesting to note that these stories appeared with no notice or fanfare, not a single cover blurb to indicated their existence in titles that were otherwise totally reprints. Only a Marvel completest who was buying these otherwise innocuous books regularly (like me) would even have noticed. *(Continued on page 80)*

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By Pat S. Calhoun

Airboy Comics

Hillman's Unique Blend

On the basis of sheer literary merit, Hillman's *Airboy* evolved—in the late 1940s and early 1950s—into an unsurpassably rich concoction!

The *Airboy* title had always been exceptional, but when they phased out all the continuing back-up characters at the close of the 1940s, they recreated a title that was simultaneously imaginative, realistic, and unlike anything that had come before.

Airboy V6 #6 (July 1949) is a good place to begin since this is the issue where Airboy meets and starts working as troubleshooter for mega-industrialist-entrepreneur Tex Calhoun. At first Calhoun just wants to buy the plans and rights to "Birdie," Airboy's trusty birdplane. Then he asks Airboy to help him solve the mystery of who is stealing blood plasma from a hospital he endowed. Airboy agrees only because the crime sounds so heinous.

They get interrupted by Calhoun's daughter, Candy, who has received a mysterious flower in the mail. Airboy recognizes it as a "Flower of Life," a Chinese plant with much legend attached to it. If one breathes too deeply of the flower's perfume—they say—one's life becomes linked to the flower's. Well, a smuggler who Calhoun helped convict (he smuggled using Tex's ships) sent the flower—after drinking in the heady scent—for revenge as he knows it's the symbol of a tong (Chinese mafia) that kills anyone else who has one.

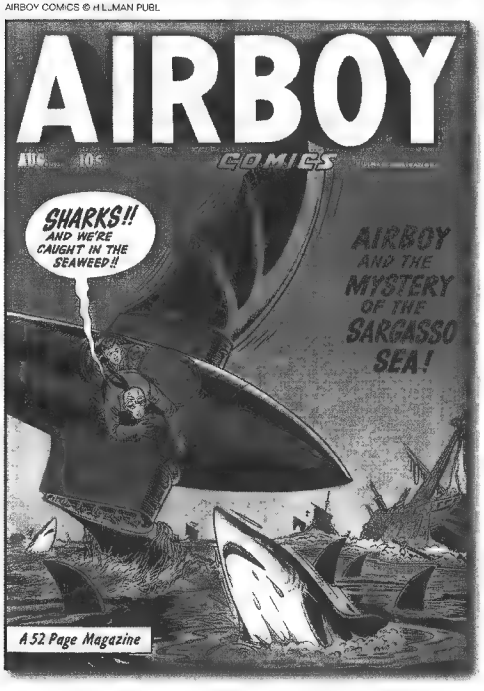
Summary fails to convey how well this reads: we end up with the smuggler holding Airboy and Tex at gunpoint and about to shoot just as—somewhere else—Candy stumbles while carrying the plant in its pot and as the plant smashes he keels over before pulling the trigger. And Airboy solves the mystery as the blood plasma was being stolen to feed the flowers!

It's Airboy versus ape on the thrilling cover of Airboy V7 #2 (Mar 1950) featuring the masterful tale of "The Thumbless People"—an example of great Atom-Age graphic storytelling!

The dramatic cover of Airboy V6 #6 (Jul 1949) captures the essence of an excellent novella involving a Chinese flower with supernatural powers.

After the fifteen-page lead comes a ten-page Heap. This tale adds new details to the Heap's origin. Fellow officers bestow a belled goose upon Von Emmelman, which is supposed to be able to grant its owner's most fervent wish. The Baron wishes for glory and becomes Germany's top World War I flying ace. But two traitors, hoping to get the magic goose, jam Von Emmelman's guns before the next dogfight.

The Baron goes down, and the villainous Bocke gets the goose and wishes for immortality. Meanwhile the dying Von Emmelman's last wish for life merges with the swamp growth his plane crashed in to form the awesome Heap. The story ends with Bocke—overcome by guilt and shunned by all—realizing eternal life is a curse and hunting the belled goose to wish for death.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COMICS
SHARKS!! AND WE'RE CAUGHT IN THE SEAWEED!!
AIRBOY AND THE MYSTERY OF THE SARGASSO SEA!
A 52 Page Magazine

Airboy V7 #7 (Aug 1950) contains an outstanding adventure on the mysterious Sargasso Sea—where calm waters and kelp beds have created a ship's graveyard of vessels from all eras.

Then comes a tale of a wolf that becomes a sled team leader during the Klondike gold rush, followed by a three-pager about a Judas goat in a New York slaughterhouse in 1938. The wrap-up, "The Wateree's Wild Ride," wonderfully drawn by Al McWilliams, tells of a ship that survives a tidal wave and a two-mile overland ride after the great earthquake of 1868 in Chile! What a delightful smorgasbord this issue is!

Airboy V7 #2 (March 1950) starts with Airboy and Tex flying in Birdie to the Aleutian Islands in the North Pacific where Calhoun maintains a base that he's lost radio contact with. They arrive at the ravaged base, and the only clue to what destroyed it are giant ape footprints. Then they find an old Chinese junk wrecked on the shore, with an old Chinese man clinging to the debris.

They rescue him, and he tells them how long ago a group of Chinese became marooned on a nearby island. They found a race of great apes there that they made their servants. They did so little themselves they grew decadent and began to practice thumb-binding—deeming the resulting helplessness to be highly aristocratic. This goes on until they grow thumbless and soon after that the apes revolt, and the humans become slaves.

The ever-helpful Airboy volunteers to take the old man home and help lead his people against the apes. He teaches them to fight and make and throw spears—even without thumbs. And he gives them the forgotten gift of fire which he knows will terrorize the apes. Then the battle begins and makes an exciting climax to a memorable yarn.

Next is "Yermak of the Steppes," a twelve-page tale of a bandit in the Russian wilds during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. After that, Bob Powell drew a boxing biography of undefeated lightweight champ Benny Leonard. And lastly, the Heap shambles into a Polish village where the pipe-carvers are dismayed at the new manager who wants to blast out the burl woods with dynamite—upsetting the balance of nature. That's when Nature sends the Heap to restore order. It all adds up to a bountiful issue.

Airboy V7 #7 (August 1950) takes us to that graveyard of the Atlantic, the Sargasso Sea, where for thousands of years ships have gotten trapped in the lush seaweed beds. Airboy, Tex, and Candy, stop there and find a tribe living in the hulk of a giant shipwreck. The stranded-for-generations group has an inbred royal family that seems to be devolving.

The three Yanks arrive just as the King is forcing the Prince to choose a bride, and he chooses Candy! In a most amazing scene the King gives his son a slap for the insult of choosing an "ugly" foreigner and knocks off the Prince's grotesque mask to reveal a handsome young man! Airboy's only chance to prevent the tragic wedding is to convince the King to willingly abdicate, and when he finds a portrait gallery of the royal family showing the original normalcy and the degeneration he abducts the ruler for a showdown.

Of course it leads to another big fight, which makes a satisfying finish to another astounding novella. The Airboy title would suffer some in 1952 when the industry trimmed down from 52 to 36 pages; the shorter stories that resulted lacked the gravitas of the 15-pagers.

The second story is a fascinating biography of Miguel Cervantes, telling how he wrote the immortal Don Quixote while in prison. Another excellent bio sketch follows, illuminating the life of Frederic Remington, the great artist of the wild west. The Heap closes the issue with a retelling of V6 #6's origin—and the evil Bocke, who this time comes by immortality through a chemical formula prepared after translating Egyptian hieroglyphics. This leads to a confrontation with the Heap inside an ancient pyramid, after which Bocke is redeemed and meets death while fleeing "the tree that walks like a man"...

Hillman writer Herb Rogoff (quoted in Mike Benton's fine overview, *The Comic Book in America*) credits editor Ed Cronin for many of the magical ideas that made Airboy so marvelous, and it's also known that Bill Woolfolk contributed a number of Heap scripts. On the art side, Ernie Schroeder piloted both Airboy and the Heap all through the late '40s and early '50s until the title ended with Hillman's leaving the comics field in 1953.

Pat Calhoun is a nationally recognized comic historian.

By Michelle Nolan

The Case against Crime Comics!

Pre-Code comic books–as grim and gory as a small percentage of them surely were–have taken a bad rap for a long time. This is especially true of pre-Code crime comics, whose cultural influence was nowhere near as great as many old-time critics maintained... and current collectors and historians continue to believe.

When I was asked to do a piece on crime comics, I accepted the challenge because I thought it would offer an ideal opportunity to expose many misconceptions, some of which have plagued the comic book industry for five decades.

Even though I feel that the case against the genre is generally a frame-up, this will be no defense of the few truly offensive crime comics. As CBM readers know, these grisly examples of four color controversy have emerged from the mists of time as some of the most interesting, rare, and collectible examples of "bad taste" in the history of American pop culture.

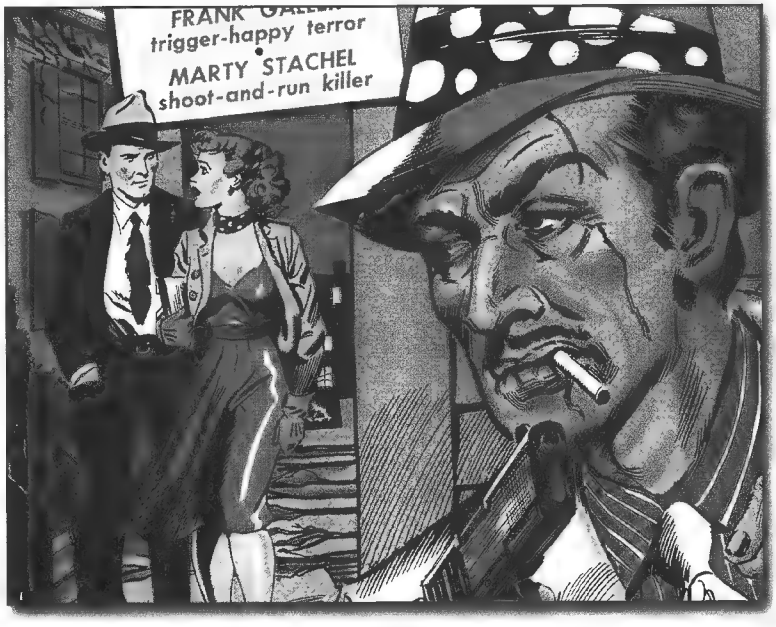
This installment of Nolan's Notebook is not intended to be a rehash of crime comics history... nor an edictment of the censorship efforts that eventually stopped their publication. That ground has been examined for clues many times, especially in Mike Benton's nicely done 1993 book *Crime Comics*. Instead, I'd like to take a look at this highly collectible genre from a new perspective... examining the statistical evidence in the the case against crime comics... and perhaps asking the question "Were crime comics really as bad as everyone believes?"

There's no question that several hundred different issues of crime comics published in the 1942-54 period represent a form of media that is distinctly distasteful, especially with regard to youngsters.

But consider what has occurred in American culture during the nearly half a century since the attacks on crime and horror comics reached a crescendo in the 1948-54 period, resulting in the creation of the Comics Code Authority.

Does anyone seriously think the problems of juvenile delinquency are less serious in the United States now than they were nearly half a century ago? Hindsight is wonderful, of course, but it's obvious now that comic books hardly could have had the influence that many critics contended they had.

With a few exceptions and blips on the comic book radar screen, comic books have steadily



MURDEROUS GANGSTERS #4 featured a visually compelling cover by master artist Everett Raymond Kinstler complete with a .45-clutching, scar-faced hoodlum waiting to ambush a shapely red-haired damsel clad in low-cut gown.
(see cover on page 16)

declined as a mass-market medium over the past 50 years. The concept that comic books seriously affect juvenile crimes today would be seen as ludicrous by trackers of pop-culture trends.

It will always be a matter of debate to what degree the media of all types affects deviant social behavior. However, I'm certain that over the past five decades, television, films and music have ever increasingly had a much more serious affect on behavior and social trends of all types than comic books.

There's no question about that today, of course, since almost all children are exposed to far more television and films than comic books.

However, many have suggested that the content of what youngsters see on television or in the movies today is potentially far more harmful than what was published in pre-Code crime comics. I'm not saying that is definitely the case, but merely that popular culture exposes youngsters to some pretty crude (and violent) images today.

There is no question in my mind that long ago comic book critics such as Dr. Fredric Wertham confused cause and effect, or, to put it another way, the chicken and the egg.

It only stands to reason that the majority of troubled and troubling youngsters read comic books, since most youngsters from most backgrounds did in those years before television became such a pervasive influence and distractions such as video games and rock music did not exist.

Such youngsters, most of whom came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, were surely exposed to good literature to a much lesser degree than upper class youth. Even though a handful of youngsters probably were influenced by the crime comics, how much influence do you really think they had with the majority of youngsters from all backgrounds?

What all that leads up to is my contention that the influence of crime comics was greatly overestimated in the 1948-54 period, primarily because they were a new aspect of popular culture and an easy target for politicians of all sorts, ranging from United States senators to school PTA leaders.

How could any critic, no matter how sincere or no matter what his or her agenda, lose with an attack on crime comics? There could have been no easier target.

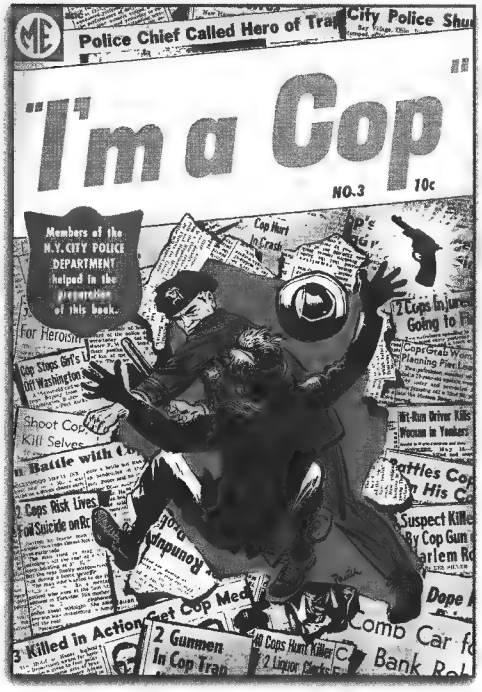
There's no question that many crime comics deserved criticism, however fondly we may view them today for their funky collectibility. Who could possibly defend the reading by children of lurid comics such as Fox's *Crimes By Women*?

Nevertheless, I seriously doubt if *Crimes By Women* led many otherwise virtuous girls—or boys—to take up a life of crime or to participate in activities they would not otherwise engage in, any more than slasher films produced a generation of slashers. The entire tempest of comic book criticism was as tasteless in its own way as the comics the critics attacked.

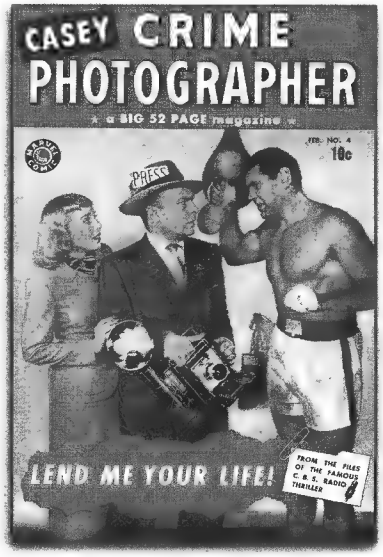
Most types of comic books dealt with some sort of conflicts, so in the eyes of Wertham and others, most comic books could be classified as "crime comics." It's hard to argue with his logic; crimes committed in outer space, the battlefield, the old West against superheroes and even in Duckburg were still crimes. (You bet those Beagle Boys were crooks!)

Even so, genuine crime comics constituted a distinct minority of all comics published, even during the 1948-54 period.

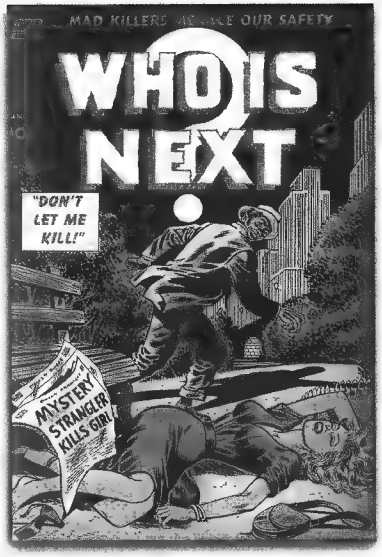
Dan Stevenson, an outstanding indexer who has done more research than anyone else with regard to comic book titles and numbers, lists some 17,873 comics published during 1948-54, give or take a few that still aren't certain to exist. Of those, Stevenson lists only about 1,500 (once again



I'M A COP #3 (A-1 Comics #128, 1954) from Magazine Enterprises is an undated one-shot with four stories and a cover by Bob Powell, one of the best of the 1950's comic book artists. This one contains one of those wonderful "bursting through the newspaper" covers, along with a story entitled "The Murders in Bed-Bug Alley!"



CASEY CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER #4 (Feb 1950) from Marvel was the last issue before becoming one of the victims of the 1950 Marvel implosion (which wasn't as serious as the 1957 Atlas implosion, but was still devastating to a good many titles). This stars Flashgun Casey, a book and radio newspaper character created by famed detective author George Harmon Coxe. He's being threatened by an angry boxer on the cover, although there is no such story inside. © 1998 MEG



WHO IS NEXT? #5 (Jan 1953) is a one-shot from Standard Comics with art by Alex Toth, Mike Sekowsky and Ross Andru. It's truly an oddity ahead of its time, containing four stories about psychopathic killers. It's listed for only $17 in GD in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, making it an undervalued gem.

Where have all the readers gone?

IN 1948, many surveys showed that well over half the youngsters in the United States were regular readers of comic books. I've seen surveys that found at least four out of every five youngsters in the country were familiar with comic books, albeit often on a pass-around basis, during the 1940s and '50s.

Virtually everything produced by the large corporate comic book publishers sold at least 200,000 copies in a nation only about half as populous as today. Sales of fewer than 100,000 to 200,000 copies of anything produced, for example, by DC or Dell would have been grounds for cancellation during the Golden Age and Silver Age.

Today, only a handful of comic books sell more than 100,000 copies, and the vast majority of these go to collectors or are sold in comic shops to regular readers.

I would bet that if you took a poll of any 1,000 United States youngsters aged 8-12, fewer than 50 would declare themselves regular readers of comic books—even as few as two or three comics per week.

In my work as a free-lance writer, I often interview teachers. Many of them have told me that they have entire classes in which only two or three youngsters read comic books. For that matter, several elementary and high school teachers have told me that anywhere from 50 to 90 percent of their classes do little, if any, recreational reading… at all! (That is hardly surprising in a country where only 10 percent of the population is responsible for more than 90 percent of the book sales.)

How many *CBM* readers know any kids that read (even comic books) on a regular basis… as opposed to watching television, playing video games, or logging onto the internet? That question is important in any attempt to understand the state of reading in this country and access the influence—or lack of it—of comic books in our culture.

But don't despair, fellow *CBM*ers. Educational institutions are continuing to re-emphasize the importance of reading, literacy campaigns blanket the country, and the quality and attractiveness of children's books has reached an amazing level. As we face the turn of the century, I think the forecast for the future of young readers is looking pretty bright!

give or take a few cross-genre oddballs) that could be considered pure crime comics.

That's fewer than 10 percent of all comics on the newsstands.

Likewise, Ernie Gerber, in Volume 2 of his monumental *Photo-Journal*, graphed the market share of comics genres through 1970. It's impossible to know exactly where each title fit in his research, but the figures seem on the money.

Crime comics went from a three percent market share in 1946 to nine percent in 1947, then reached 14, 12, 10 and 13 over the 1948-51 period before declining to 6, 6, 7 and 6 through 1955. Once again, the market share over the 1948-54 period is less than 10 percent.

Contrast this with Gerber's assessment of romance comics (not including teen comics), which began with one percent market shares in 1947 and 1948 before leaping to 23 and 27 percent, respectively, in 1949 and 1950. In the years 1951 through 1956, as crime comics seriously declined and then nearly vanished, romance comics maintained a market share of 14 or 15 percent every year.

It's my contention that the only reason crime comics achieved any real popularity at all was that they basically replaced super and costumed hero comics for a few years.

In one classic case, the long-running costumed hero Spy Smasher from Fawcett was renamed Crime Smasher. *Crime Smasher*, however, ran only one issue (1948) in his own title and in only eight issues of *Whiz Comics* (#76-83), ending in March 1947. Spy Smasher, on the other hand, was so popular that the character not only ran in 75 issues of *Whiz*, but was made into a smashing (pun fully intended) Republic movie serial in 1942, starring Kane Richmond.

Crime comics were published primarily in anthology formats. Even if the Comics Code had not spelled doom for them, their days were numbered anyway because the anthology format became increasingly unpopular in the 1950s and '60s.

Here's a quick quiz for those who think they know something about crime comics:

How many anthology crime comics—that is, those not devoted to a primary character, such as Dick Tracy of Mr. District Attorney—ran as many as 25 issues?

Crime Does Not Pay from Lev Gleason, which had the anthology crime comic genre to itself from 1942-46, had the longest run, from #22 in 1942 through #147 in 1955. (I always thought the name of this comic was terribly odd. Does this mean that if crime did, indeed, pay, that it would be OK?)

Gleason's other crime title, *Crime and Punishment*, ran 74 issues from 1948-55.

Prize/Crestwood published the second-longest running title, *Justice Traps the Guilty*, with #1-92 from 1947-58. The company also published a companion crime title, *Headline Comics* #23-77.

The other long-running crime titles were:

Marvel's *All-True Crime* (*Official True Crime* for its first two issues) #24-52 and *Justice Comics* (*Tales of Justice* for the last 16 issues) #7-67.

Hillman's *Real Clue Crime Stories* and *Crime Detective*, which ran 72 and 32 issues, respectively, in volume numbers.

Our Publishing's *Wanted Comics* #9-53; St. John's *Authentic Police Cases* #1-38; Ace's *Crime Must Pay the Penalty* (just *Penalty* for its last two issues) #33 and #2-48.

DC's *Detective Comics* (26 issues before *Batman*) and *Gang Busters* #1-67.

EC's 27 issues of *Crime SuspenStories*.

Quality's *Police Comics* #103-127 (following the abandonment of Plastic Man and other heroes).

And Cross's *Perfect Crime* #1-33.

No single comic book publisher ever really succeeded with more than two crime titles!

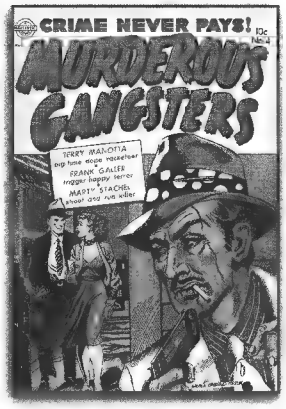
To be sure, there were many short-lived crime comics.

The only major reference work on the subject, Benton's *Crime Comics* from Taylor Publishing, lists some 115 anthology titles published from 1947-59. But their combined output was less than 700 issues! In other words, most crime comics were dismal financial failures.

One company, Dell, published many, many more funny animal comics during this same period.

Fox, the firm infamous for publishing many of the sleaziest crime comics, published only 70 such comics from 1948 until going out of business in 1951 (unless you want to count a few issues of *Blue Beetle* and *Phantom Lady* or the jungle titles).

The influence of Fox in Wertham's 1954 book attacking virtually all comics, *Seduction of the Innocent*, was far, far out of proportion to Fox Comics' marketplace influence on the youth of America.



MURDEROUS GANGSTERS #4 (Jun 1952, see close-up on page 13) from Realistic Comics (an Avon imprint) is noteworthy for the title alone. Imagine a typical eight-year-old reader bringing this one home to show Mom!

Do you begin to see a pattern here?

As far as crime comics devoted to a single character, they were generally a flop. Benton lists some 44 of these through the 1950s, the vast majority of them based on characters first introduced in other media including the comic strips.

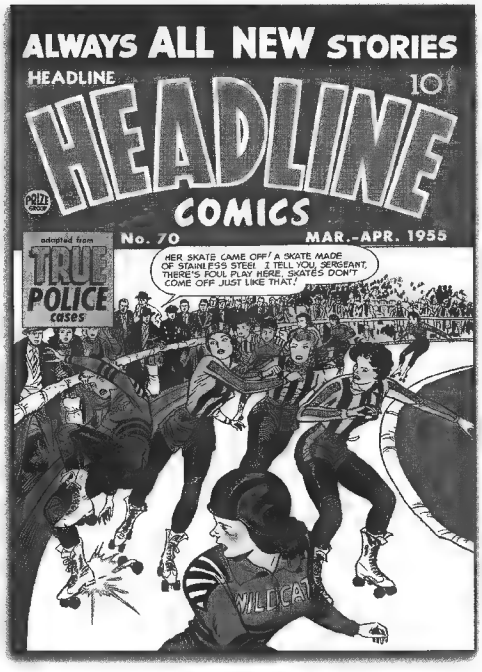
The only long-running single-character crime comic in history was *Dick Tracy*, which ran #1-145 from Dell (#1-24) and Harvey (#25 on) from 1948-61, following several earlier one-shot appearances. I'm convinced the only reason *Dick Tracy* ran so long was because of the immense popularity of the newspaper strip, which led to hundreds of newspaper Sunday comic sections.

In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if *Dick Tracy* might have been one of those comic books read as often by adults as by children. However, I remember that I enjoyed it during the 1950s, although the continued stories often irritated me and made collecting back issues a problem.

Ironically, DC Comics (then known as National Comics) published the No. 2 and 3 longest-running characters, both of them based on radio and television shows: *Mr. District Attorney* #1-67 from 1948-59 and *Big Town* #1-50 from 1950-58.

DC's crime comics rarely departed from good taste, although a few of the early issues of *Gang Busters* were pretty gamy by DC standards. I can't imagine too many parents objecting to them; I know mine did not, letting me keep old issues of *Mr. District Attorney* even while I was forced to return the likes of EC's *Crime SuspenStories* to the second-hand bookstore. (All of my pre-Code "finds" had to pass the parent test.)

Mr. District Attorney and *Big Town* (starring the adventures of Illustrated Press editor Steve Wilson) are two of the most underrated of all comics in any genre. Their plot-heavy stories were always filled with gimmicks rather than violence and are



HEADLINE COMICS #70 (Mar/Apr 1955) from Prize Comics is one of the rare examples of a 1955 comic book that bears an April cover date yet does not have the Comics Code Authority stamp. Amazingly, it appeared on the newsstand along side Code-approved issues! By comparison, DC began carrying the Code symbol with issues dated March (in the case of monthly titles) or March/April (for bi-monthly titles). © PRIZE PUBLICATIONS

still a joy to read. They are also among the few comics from the 1950s that still seem fresh today.

Only one other single character, newspaper strip detective Kerry Drake from Magazine Enterprises and Harvey, ran as many as 33 issues—unless you want to count that wonderful plague of spies and saboteurs in *T-Man* from Quality Comics.

The T-Man, Pete Trask, starred in 38 issues of his own title, running from 1950 until Quality folded at the end of 1956. He also starred in *Police Comics*. He was one of the characters not picked up by DC when it bought the rights to Quality, with his time apparently having passed with the diminished feeling about the Red Scare in the United States.

T-Man was the longest-running series based on an entirely original comic book character. Another such outstanding character from Quality, Ken Shannon, ran in *Police Comics* #103-127 and in 10 issues of his own title.

Ken Shannon not only featured outstanding art from the Quality stable, but darned good stories straight out of the pulps and lurid paperbacks of the period.

Other than T-Man and Ken Shannon, how many original detective characters had their own comic books, however brief? The answer will surprise you: a very short list indeed.

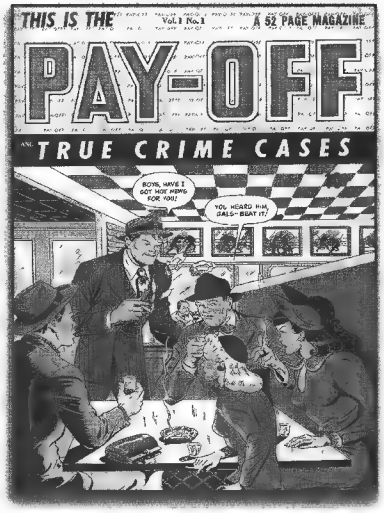
Such characters were Boy Detective (Avon), Crime Smasher (Fawcett), I'm a Cop (Magazine Enterprises), Jeff Jordan (Parents), Johnny Danger (Toby), Johnny Dynamite (Comic Media and Charlton), Kent Blake (Marvel), Little Al (Ziff-Davis), Molly O'Day (Avon), Mr. Risk (Ace), Private Eye-Rockey Jorden (Marvel), Public Defender (Charlton), Rookie Cop (Charlton), Rusty, Boy Detective (Gleason), Sam Hill (Archie), Scotland Yard starring Inspector Farnsworth (Charlton), Breeze Lawson, Sky Sheriff (D.S. Publishing), Special Agent Steve Saunders (Parents), Undercover Girl Starr Flagg (ME), Young King Cole (Curtis) and Zaza the Mystic (Charlton).

How many of these characters are you familiar with? I'd be willing to bet that not one collector in a hundred has read any of these comics.

Benton points out on page 45 of *Crime Comics* that one comic book title in seven from the 1948-49 period was a crime title. That seems about right, but their influence was generally brief, and, as Gerber's graph shows, crime comics were certainly never more than one-seventh of the market.

Crime-fighting characters, be they cops or G-Men, simply did not prove to be nearly as commercially successful as superheroes had been or would be again.

The creation of the Comics Code late in 1954 (the first Code Approved Comics were dated March and April 1955) did not specifically forbid the use of the word "crime" in the title. Even so, by the end of 1955, not a single



PAY-OFF #1 (Jul/Aug 1948), from the short-lived D.S. Publishing Co., a company that published several crime titles. The cover on this shows two men smoking and drinking in a bar when a third arrives saying, "Boys, have I got hot news for you!" Whereupon one of the men at the table responds, "You heard him, gals—beat it!" This is but one of the many examples of pre-Code "tough guys" putting "dames in their place!"

HARD TO FIND CRIME!

40 tough books 1942-56

KEY: Title Issue # (Date, Publisher) Gerber Scarcity Index

Big Town #3 (Mar 1951, DC) 4
Charlie Chan #6 (Jun 1955, Charlton) 8
Clue Comics #3 (May 1947, Hillman) 4
Crime Clinic #5 (Summer 1952, Ziff Davis) 5
Crime Detective Cases #9 (Aug 1949, Hillman) 6
Crime Does Not Pay #22 (#1, Jul 1949, Gleason) 7
Crime Does Not Pay #23 (Sep 1949, Gleason) 6
Crime Does Not Pay #24 (Nov 1942, Gleason) 7
Crime Files #5 (#1, Sep 1952, Standard) 5
Crime Illustrated #1 (Dec 1955, EC) 6
Crime Illustrated #2 (Apr 1956, EC) 6
Crime Must Stop (One-shot, Oct 1952, Hillman) 7
Crime Reporter #3 (Dec 1948, St. John) 5
Crime Mysteries #5 (Jan 1953, Trojan) 6
Crime Smasher (One-shot, Summer 1948, Fawcett) 5
Danger Trail #3 (Dec 1950, DC) 7
Danger Trail #5 (Apr 1951, DC) 6
Dead-End Crime Stories (One-shot, Apr 1950, Kirby) 7
Down With Crime #5 (Jul 1952, Fawcett) 6
Gang World #6 (Jan 1953, Standard) 6
Hunted #2 (Sep 1950, Fox) 4
The Informer #7 (Apr 1954, Feature) 6
Ken Shannon #5 (Jun 1952, Quality) 4
The Killers #7 (no month, 1947, ME) 5
The Killers #2 (no month, 1948, ME) 7
Law against Crime #3 (Aug 1948, Essankay) 5
Manhunt #9 (Jun 1948, ME) 5
Mr. Risk #7 (#1, Oct 1950, Ace) 5
Mr. Risk #2 (Dec 1950, ME) 6
Police Badge #479 (#5, Sep 1955, Atlas) 4
Police Comics #109 (Nov 1951, Quality) 5
Prison Riot (One-shot, no month, 1952, Avon) 5
Racquet Squad in Action #1 (Mar 1954, Charlton) 5
Reform School Girl (One-shot, no month 1951, Avon) 7
Saint #8 (no month 1950, Avon) 6
Sherlock Holmes #1 (Oct 1955, Charlton) 6
Sherlock Holmes #2 (Mar 1956, Charlton) 6
True Crime Comics #2 (#1, May 1947, Magazine Village) 6
True Crime Comics #3 (#2, Aug 1947, Magazine Village) 6
Underworld Crime #7 (Jun 1953, Fawcett) 6
Who is next? #5 (#1, One-shot, Jan 1953, Standard) 6

comic book on the market used "crime" in the title.

I suspect that, even with the Comics Code symbol, that many newsstands simply wouldn't take comics with "crime" in the title, so adverse had the publicity against them been.

Collecting post-Code crime comics is fun, largely because they are as scarce as they are tame. I suspect they did not sell very well, and most probably ran into distribution problems.

The last issue of Gleason's *Crime and Punishment* (#74, August 1955), looks more like a romance comic, with a man attending to an unconscious woman while another woman urges him to help her.

Such a cover would never have been published in the pre-Code days. One of the most enjoyable aspects of collecting post-Code comics of all types in the 1955-56 period is in seeing how the artists and editors tried to cope with the Comics Code.

I (like many) collect crime comics mostly for their "funkability" factor, either with regard to the stories or the covers. Fortunately, most crime comics remain in the affordable range, especially in mid and lower grades.

On a final note, the reporter-as-crook catcher genre is one of my favorites, although you don't find it too often in comic books. You do, however, find it in many old paperback books and pulp magazines of the 1930s, '40s and '50s. For example, Coxe created both Flashgun Casey and reporter Kent Murdock, both excellent examples of the genre and the subject of several excellent novels reprinted in Dell paperbacks.

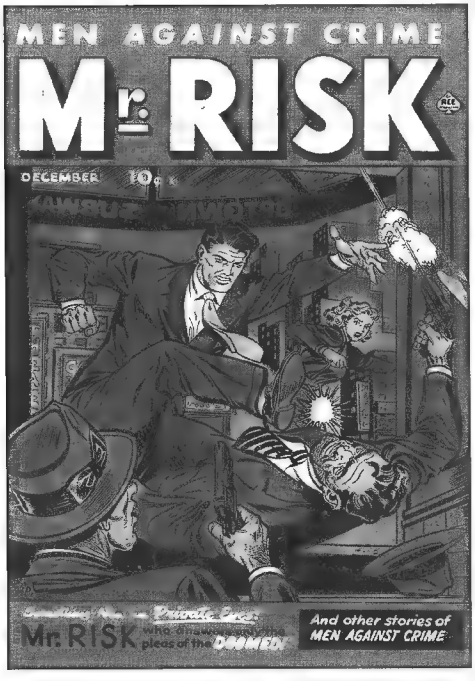
Big Town, detailing the exploits of Illustrated Press editor Steve Wilson, is one of my favorite DC titles. It's also one of the most difficult to complete (how many collectors besides this writer and Ye Editor have a complete set of all 50?). These are terrifically plotted stories—proof positive that a crackling good tale can be told in 8 or 10 pages!

When I got into the newspaper field in the mid-1960s, it was still a pretty romantic business, run by crusty old editors in noisy, crowded offices filled with smoke. Even though the *Superman* television series of the 1950s inspired me to take an interest in newspapers, I must admit very few reporters had private offices such as Clark Kent and Lois Lane enjoyed.

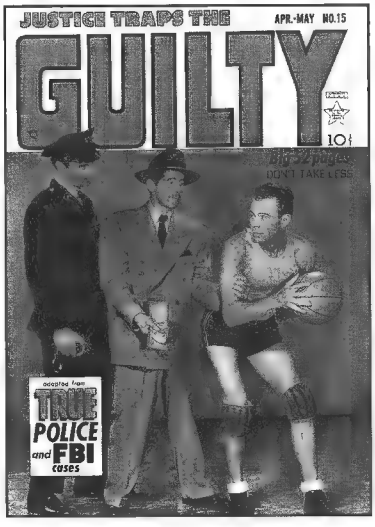
These days, however, working in a newspaper office is akin to laboring in a library, complete with carpets and computers. Reporters set their own type while working on computers, editors are often horribly overworked while doubling as backshop production people, and newspapers in general employ only a fraction of the people they once had on their payrolls. Watching one of those wonderful old newspaper films such as *Deadline USA* (1952, starring Humphrey Bogart) is enough to make an old-style reporter cry!

I'd be interested in your reactions to the topic of crime comics. In the meantime, remember the motto of Hillman's *Real Clue Comics* "Commit a Crime and the World is Made of Glass!"

As for history's case against most pre-Code crime comics, I say the verdict for most of them is… NOT GUILTY!



MR. RISK #2 (Dec 1950) from Ace Publications is one of the few crime comics with an original continuing character. This one is listed as being published by Humor Publications—the sort of incongruity from which Wertham made great hay. The previous issue (#7, continuing from **All Romances**) was the only other issue before the title was changed to **Men Against Crime** with #3, which continued to **Adventures of Mr. Risk**. Once again, it shows how generically named crime titles apparently sold better than those named for a specific, but relatively unknown character.



Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s.

JUSTICE TRAPS THE GUILTY #15 (Apr/May 1950) from Prize Comics has an amazingly funky cover to illustrate the lead story, "Basketball Bribe!" Published during a time of publicity with regard to college scandals, it shows a cop with handcuffs and a plainclothesman showing his badge while grabbing a 30-something player holding a basketball. It doesn't get any better than this, folks! © PRIZE PUB.

in this issue:
TRUE CONFESSION OF A GIRL GANGLEADER
THE BOSS TOLD US ABOUT YOUR ACCIDENT, NICK-- SO WE THOUGHT WE'D DROP UP TO SEE YOU!
BUT I HAVEN'T HAD ANY ACCIDENT- --UGH!--
LISTEN SQUEALER! WHEN THE BOSS SAYS YOU HAVE AN ACCIDENT-- YOU HAVE AN ACCIDENT!
SIMON KIRBY

WORLD OF GLASS

Simon and Kirby Pre-Code Crime Comics

By Jeff Gelb

Joe Simon and Jack Kirby are generally credited with starting the romance comics book, with *My Date* and particularly *Young Romance*. On the other hand, they didn't produce the industry's first crime comic books. Charles Biro generally gets fair credit for that, with his brilliant, hard-boiled *Crime Does Not Pay*, which was an immediate and huge hit in 1942. Simon and Kirby were nothing if not astute students of the comics field. So, after World War II, as superhero comics started to lose readers, Biro's multi-million-selling titles made it easy to see where to go next: crime.

The dynamic duo began their assault on crime comics by taking over the editorial reins of two flagging Prize titles, *Clue* and *Headline*. For *Clue*, they dipped their toes in the crime waters with a character named Gunmaster. Reporting to the mysterious robed "council of elders" for his assignments, Gunmaster was a dapper gent, dressed in hat, suit, with a pencil-thin mustache and speaking perfect English, who also hap-

pened to be a crack shot with any gun. This cultured crime fighter was somewhere between a superhero, the Saint, and the Spirit. In fact, he even had his own recurring femme fatale foil, a lovely blonde named Velvet Silver. It was a fun if underwhelming initial foray into the world of crime in comics but it left little overall impression.

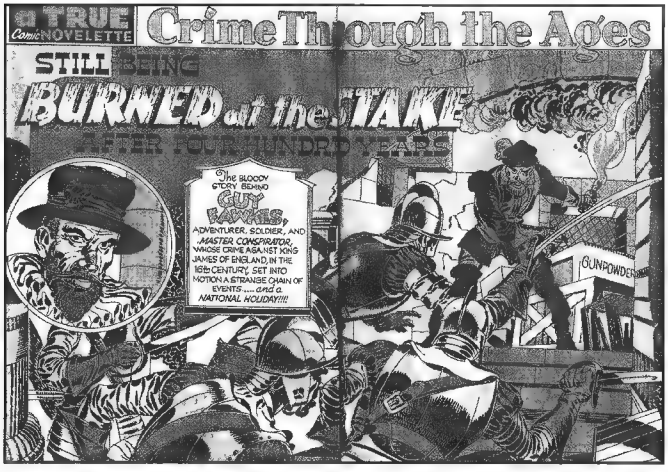
They must have agreed. After just a few such stories, S&K struck out for new territory with some all-out crime stories. They gave each title its own logo: *Real Clue* had the especially evocative "Commit a Crime and the World is Made of Glass," while *Headline* just reminded readers that "Crime Can't Win." Both titles promised "true famous police cases," of which they would occasionally attempt. But more often, they had a ball making up names and situations that they knew readers would respond to.

These were stories of racketeers, counterfeiters, swindlers and gangsters. In other words, not your average next-door neighbors. But the comics reading public was, for some reason, infatuated with the criminal mind and its evil deeds, and the S&K crime comics were quick to give the public what it wanted, in spades.

In some issues of their crime books, Simon and Kirby included wonderful two-page spreads... including "Crime Through the Ages." Two-page spreads were a relatively uncommon occurrence in comics before 1960.

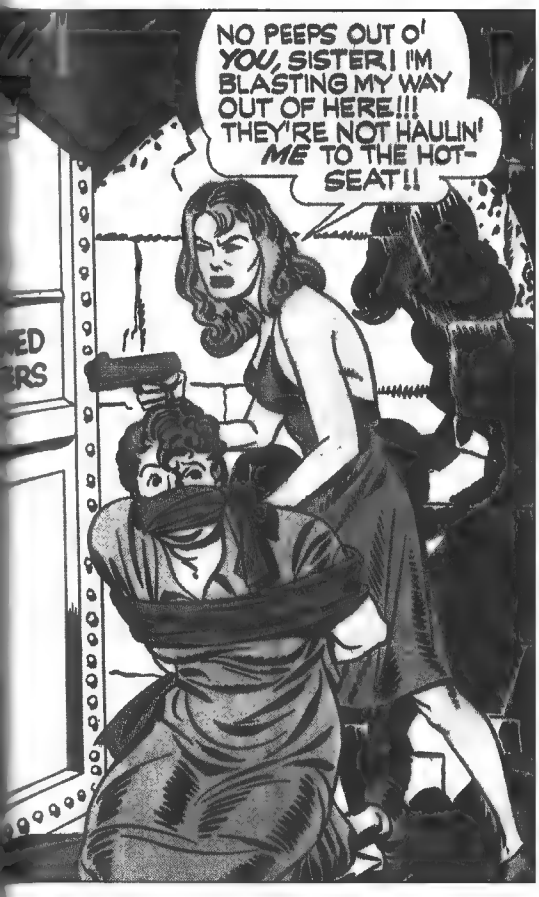
To hook new readers, they produced especially enticing covers. Several are classics in the field. Justice Traps the Guilty #53, for instance, features the "Crestwood Five" line-up of Ben Oda, Joe Simon, Joe Genola, Mort Meskin and Jack Kirby. *Headline* #37 has Kirby himself in a photo playing a burglar. According to Simon, that's his arm in a cop's uniform fingering Jack. *Justice Traps the Guilty* #4 has an incredibly brutal gunshot cover, while *Justice Traps the Guilty* #1 has a shocking electric chair image. Later covers featured a sort of "universal cop" dressed in blue, making arrests and rescues.

These covers hooked the boys. But what about the girls? No problem: the S&K crime comics had more than their share of beautiful babes. It's obvious that crimes by women helped sell comics, to boys and girls, because S&K trotted out dozens of


A TRUE Comic NOVELETTE
Crime Through the Ages
STILL BEING
BURNED at the STAKE
AFTER FOUR HUNDRED YEARS!
The BLOODY STORY BEHIND GUY FAWKES
ADVENTURER, SOLDIER, AND MASTER CONSPIRATOR, WHOSE CRIME AGAINST KING JAMES OF ENGLAND, IN THE 16th CENTURY, SET INTO MOTION A STRANGE CHAIN OF EVENTS.... and a NATIONAL HOLIDAY!!!!
GUNPOWDER

them in the lead story position. Check these titillating titles: "I Was an Unwitting Accomplice to a Numbers Racket Combine," "I Worked for the Fence," "I Was a Member of the Ring That Operated the Vicious Insurance Reward Racket," "I Was a Shoplifter in an Organized Pickpocket Gang," "Queen of the Speedball Mob," "I'll Always Regret the Day I Joined the Money Making Machine Swindlers!" Gasp—what a mouthful of sins!

These were some of Kirby's most glamorous women, too: full-lipped, full-bodied, big-bosomed, usually found in tight dresses or evening gowns. In appearance, they owed much to the pin-up queens of the time, particularly Rita Hayworth from her noire starring role as "Gilda." In other words, they were all gorgeous. Most were also just a stone's throw away from the women who starred in Simon and Kirby's concurrent romance titles, and in fact, there must have been some crossover readership of those books. The women of the crime comics were in the wrong place at the wrong time, meeting guys from the wrong side of the tracks. Soon, their temptations were too powerful to ignore, and they fell under the sway of these gangsters to become their pawns, victims, or moll. The major difference between the stories of women and tales of men came at the conclusion. The men either died or went to jail for life, gener-



ally unrepentant. The women normally saw the error of their ways in time to serve mild jail sentences while anticipating exciting futures as law-abiding members of society.

To their credit, Simon and Kirby avoided all-out gore to tell their stories. People might be shot on-panel, but there was never any blood. Scenes of torture were similarly off screen. While it might have been tempting to try and keep up with the nastier of the crime comics produced by competing publishers, S&K wisely decided against lowering themselves to their gutter level. As such, their stories were more refined and adult.

As quick and talented as he was, even Jack Kirby couldn't provide all the art for these tales. There was an entire stable of very competent artistic talent, including Mort Meskin and Jerry Robinson, Bruno Premiani, Marvin Stein, Bill Draut, Carmine Infantino and Bernard Sachs, Bob Fuje (wisely borrowed from *Crime Does Not Pay*), A. C. Hollingsworth (who drew a particularly voluptuous Wood-like woman), John Belfi, Charles Nicholas, Vic Donahue (an under-appreciated lost talent), Manny Stallman, and even Bernie Krigstein (as "B. B. Krigg"), to name but a few. The S&K artists were uniformly excellent, no surprise given the quality of their bosses' artistic skills.

While it's easy to identify much of the art in these books, it is unfortunately impossible to identify the writers. Artists were apparently encouraged, or at least allowed to sign their work in the crime comics, but no such luck for writers. At the 1998 ComicCon International San Diego, I asked Simon to name his Mainline/ Prize writers. Aside from Jack Oleck, Dave Wood and Ed Herron, he couldn't recall any other names, instead recalling a pool of writers who worked on all their books. Similarly, mentions of writers are sadly lacking in Joe Simon's autobiographical *The Comic Book Makers*. In that book, Simon indicates he and Jack wrote many of the stories at that time. My sense is that Jack wrote many of the stories that he drew, because those stories are quite similar in tone to the '70's crime one-shot magazine, *In The Days of the Mob*, which we know he did indeed write.

Simon and Kirby's rendition of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The single panel above covers ⅔ of a page.

Lending credence to that theory is a 1982 interview with Will Eisner, in which Kirby was quoted as saying, "Most of the time, I wrote the story." In any case, it's obvious Kirby had a fondness for tough-guy material. His boyhood Hell's Kitchen background gave him a unique perspective of the criminal environment. In the Eisner interview Kirby stated, "I knew the gangsters and I knew the cops." That knowledge is reflected in every crime comics panel he drew. His art was every bit as dramatic as his former superhero work. But now a powerful new ingredient had been added: reality. These stories took place in a more or less real world, with some real people and situations mixed in with genre fictional trappings.

Kirby obviously loved drawing these ne'er-do-wells, often doing facial caricatures reminiscent of his great comedic work in the soon-to-follow Fighting American. The crime stories also built suspense in a way that Kirby took full advantage of, cramming panel after panel with lush, super-heated artwork so palpable you can almost feel the characters' guilt-induced sweat.

Another thing he undoubtedly appreciated was being able to illustrate crime stories from different eras, as the S&K crime stories were not all set in modern times. Fans were just as likely to read of Guy Fawkes, the St. Valentine's Day massacre, or a western outlaw as they were the misadventures of a modern malcontent.

But nothing lasts forever. S&K's last crime comic, *Police Trap*, was introduced at a very tough time for comics, when publishers were falling by the wayside. Apparently readers were starting to get their leisure kicks from a new mass medium

known as television. And there was, of course, the constant harping by Dr. Wertham to contend with, confusing parents about whether comics were suitable for their children. The cumulative effect was the massive downsizing of the comics industry, which affected even Simon and Kirby, whose *Police Trap* failed after just six issues.

One of the great things about collecting the S&K pre-Code crime comics is that they're not criminally expensive. That's especially gratifying when you consider that there's a tremendous amount of prime Kirby art in many of these issues. *Headline* #23, for instance, has 44 pages of pure Kirby! This is more than generous, it's a bonanza! Paying $20 in Good or even $160 in NM for this book seems a minor miracle in these times of sky-high comics values.

S&K's pre-Code crime comics were always exciting, well-written and beautifully-drawn genre gems. They apparently never caught on with the fervor of their romance comics. Just count the number of romance comics S&K produced during the same period they were drawing crime comics—romance outnumbered crime three or four to one in Simon and Kirby's output. Obviously, they knew a good thing when they saw it in their weekly paychecks. Ultimately, that level of success proved that love does conquer all—even crime.

Jeff Gelb is a freelance writer and editor. His first novel, Spectors, *was published in 1988.*

S&K used "layered" perspective on many of their covers. The eye moves from the foreground to the background... each time adding an additional word balloon to increase the "real-time" feeling of the scene.

TRUE
INSIDE FACTS BEHIND FAMOUS DETECTIVE CASES
I WONDER WHO THE GUN-CRAZY LITTLE PUNK IS? I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY HE SHOT AT ME?
HAH! AND I THOUGHT I HAD A BIG STORY! WELL, IT'S ALWAYS GOOD FOR A FILLER IN THE OBITUARY COLUMN!
I SHOWED THOSE COPS THEY COULDN'T TAKE A BIG SHOT LIKE ME WITHOUT A BATTLE -- THEY GOT ME, BABY--BUT I'LL BET THIS MAKES THE HEADLINES--
PRESS
SIMON-KIRBY

A... PANELS © PRIZE PUBLICATIONS

Atlas

ADVENTURES INTO TERROR	18	RIVER CITY COPY	VF/VF+	$165
ADVENTURES INTO TERROR	18		GVG	$18
ADVENTURES INTO TERROR	25		GOOD	$15
ADVENTURES INTO TERROR	26		VG-	$25
ADVENTURES INTO TERROR	27		GOOD	$15
ADVENTURES INTO TERROR	29	RIVER CITY COPY	VF-	$115
BATTLE ACTION	1	FILE COPY	VF-/VF	$100
BATTLE ACTION	22		FVF	$20
BATTLEFIELD	5	GREAT COVER	VF-	$40
BATTLE FRONT	18		FVF	$25
BATTLE GROUND	11		FINE+	$35
COMBAT	1	FILE COPY	VF-	$40
MARVEL TALES	159	RIVER CITY COPY	VF++	$150
MYSTERY TALES	8		GOOD	$10
MYSTERY TALES	14		GVG	$20
MYSTERY TALES	16	PIECE OUT ON COVER	FAIR/GOOD	$8
MYSTERY TALES	18		GOOD+	$22
MYSTERY TALES	24		GVG	$18
MYSTERY TALES	46	DOUBLE COVER/RIVER CITY	VF+	$225
MYSTIC	15	RIVER CITY COPY	NM	$325
MYSTIC	25		GVG	$25
MYSTIC	29		VG-	$25
MYSTIC	54		FINE+	$75
MYSTICAL TALES	1		FINE	$60
SPELLBOUND	33	RIVER CITY COPY	VF+	$150
STRANGE TALES	62	RIVER CITY COPY	VF+	$200
SUSPENSE	4		FINE+	$75
SUSPENSE	9		FINE	$65
UNCANNY TALES	6		VG-	$50
UNCANNY TALES	13		VG	$40
UNCANNY TALES	14	SMALL PIECE OUT	GOOD	$20
WAR COMICS	40	GREAT COVER	FINE+	$25
WAR COMICS	42		VF-	$35
WAR ACTION	3	FILE COPY	FVF	$40
WAR ADVENTURES	12	FILE/GREAT COVER	VF	$45
WORLD OF FANTASY	9	RIVER CITY	FINE++	$75

EC

ACES HIGH	1	WINDY CITY COPY	VF++	$150
ANIMAL FABLES	1	WINDY CITY COPY	VF++	$300
EXTRA!	1	WINDY CITY COPY	VF	$125
HAPPY HOULIHANS	1	ORIGIN MOON GIRL	FINE+	$100
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SEDUCERS OF THE INNOCENT

The bloody legacy of pre-Code crime!

BY NICKY WRIGHT

Superheroes had their hands full during World War II. There were the Axis powers to beat... and they took some beating!... which meant millions plus sales of four color mayhem to ten-year-olds eagerly relishing the defeat of Hitler and his evil henchmen in every issue of *Captain America* and *Human Torch*. The enemy was always depicted as a terrifying monstrosity, as evil as all get out and great, scary fun as well.

But the war ended. Thankfully. Hangman, Sub-Mariner, Black Terror et al trudged home, their jobs done. The comic publishers watched sales drop. Down, down, went the profits, the golden years were over.

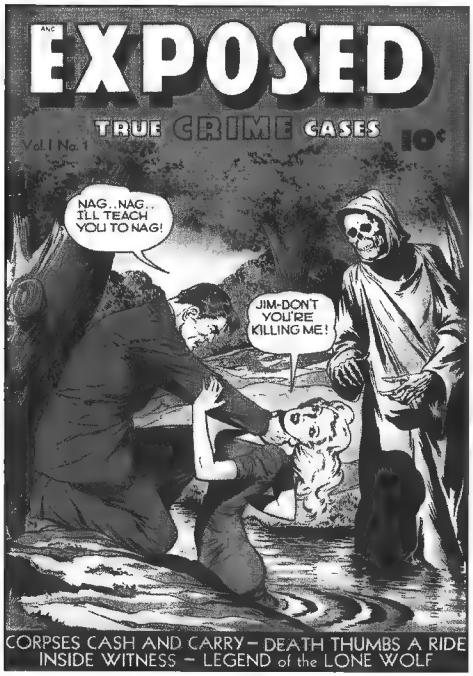
But one small publisher was doing just fine... and Leverett Gleason was his name. He published *Crime Does Not Pay*. Gleason started out with a pair of adventure comics called *Silver Streak* and *Daredevil Comics* in 1941. Later, he and then-partner Arthur Bernhard hired two artists from the comic art shop of Harry "A" Chesler to write and edit the new titles. They were Charles Biro and Bob Wood.

Wood and Biro had become friends at the Chesler shop. Charles Biro was as tall as a basketball player and had a talent, not only for drawing, but writing and marketing as well. Bob Wood was... or appeared to be... quieter, more withdrawn. The two hit it off and made a perfect pair to work on Bernhard's and Gleason's new comics.

Gleason was politically a left wing liberal, very

AND SO IN THE SPRING OF 1935, SOCKS LAZIA GOT THE "CROWNING" HE AND
DESERVE WHO TRY TO CREATE A KINGDOM OF CRIME IN A REPUBLIC OF
SOCKS LAZI
KING

committed to his beliefs which extended to giving Biro and Wood a share of the profits his company, Comic House, was making. This was unheard of in an industry more likely to take their artists and writers to the cleaners rather than give them anything other than the bare bones of a wage. With the views Gleason believed in, it was natural that he deplored everything Hitler stood for, and the first issue of *Daredevil* was memorable indeed. The cover depicted Hitler and the blue and red cat-suited Daredevil with the words "Daredevil Battles Hitler" emblazoned across the illustration. The somewhat busy artwork was by Bob Wood.


EXPOSED
TRUE CRIME CASES
Vol. 1 No. 1
10¢
NAG...NAG... I'LL TEACH YOU TO NAG!
JIM-DON'T YOU'RE KILLING ME!
CORPSES CASH AND CARRY – DEATH THUMBS A RIDE
INSIDE WITNESS – LEGEND of the LONE WOLF

Both new titles sold well, especially *Daredevil* which was to continue for 134 issues until September 1956. Pleased with his editors, Gleason reportedly told them that if they could come up with a new idea that would prove popular, both men would be rich. One night Biro and Wood were sitting in a bar discussing ideas when Biro remembered the time he had been approached by a man who offered him a "indiscreet rendezvous" with a woman. Biro declined. The very next day Charles spotted the man's picture in the paper... he'd been arrested for kidnapping the woman! He told Wood about the incident and suggested a comic book dealing with gangsters and murderers, real and imagined.

Both men became much enthused with the idea and told Gleason who immediately gave the OK to proceed. The title was to be the now-famous *Crime Does Not Pay* which was inspired by MGM's popular mid-'30s movie series of the same name. (Amazingly, MGM never sued anybody!)

A 64-page comic, *Crime Does Not Pay* replaced *Silver Streak* but continued its numbering with issue #22. This numbering anomaly was favored by comic publishers because it avoided the postal permit fee for entering a new title as second class matter.

That first issue was entirely different from the other titles on the stands. Dated July 1942, *Crime Does Not Pay* featured strips and actual articles about real criminals. "True Crime Cases" shouted to readers over photographs of vicious felons like Killer Lapke and other notorious villains. The Biro-illustrated cover was crammed full of murder and mayhem. When I was purchasing my first copy by phone, the seller described to cover like this: "there's a guy with a tommy gun holding a young woman and blasting away at everything. A pair of hands in the foreground drops a handgun and you see that part of his hand blown away. And between the covers it gets worse; the violence is unbelievable."

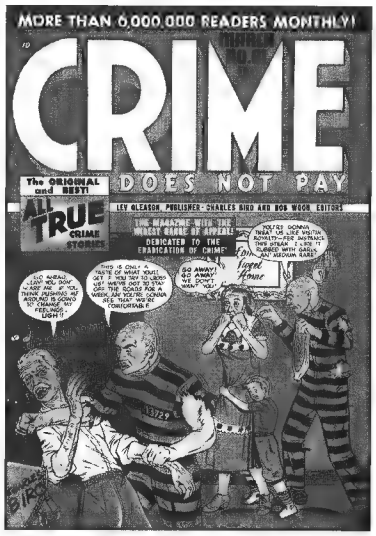
And it was unbelievable. And it got even worse in follow-on issues. Biro and Wood sought out tales of nastiest killers, the cruelest mobsters, and the most vicious gun molls. *All True Crime Stories* screamed from the covers under the 3" high letters spelling "Crime." The words "Does Not Pay" were a mere ¼" in height. The word "Crime" was clearly what sold the title!

By war's end, Gleason couldn't keep up with demand. Adults bought the comic in droves... and children, faced with a choice of gritty realism or declining interest in superheroes, plunked their dimes down for *Crime Does Not Pay*. The first few issues sold a healthy 200,000 copies but by 1946 sales had zoomed to 800,000 an issue. By '48, the title was hitting sales of almost a million per month. To help with promotion, Biro splash the words "More than 5,000,000 Readers Monthly" above the title. Shortly after this was increased to six million, a total no doubt arrived at by the number of supposed readers after the comic had been bought. (It was a common practice among comic publishers to multiply the print run times five to get circulation. This was based on the idea that comics were passed on to at least four other readers after the original purchase.)

From 1942 until 1947, *Crime Does Not Pay* was number one in a field of one. Its original, simplistic and cartoony art gave way to more gritty realism with the regular use of excellent artists like George Tuska, Dan Barry and Bob Fujitani. These three turned Biro's wordy but brutal scripts into memorable, blood gushing nastiness on every page. As comics go, *Crime Does Not Pay* was anything but nice. Superheroes were fun and fantasy, funny animals were funny, and *Classics* attempted to bring youngsters great literature. In contrast, *Crime Does Not Pay* traded on America's love of ultra violence. As parent groups and clergy became more and more alarmed, sales continued to boom.

By 1947 other publishers were beginning to feel the pinch of mounting public disquiet over *Crime Does Not Pay*, but they jumped on the crime

The cruelty and brutality depicted on the cover of Crime Does Not Pay #61 (Mar 1948) was "business as usual" for many pre-Code crime titles.


MORE THAN 6,000,000 READERS MONTHLY!
CRIME
DOES NOT PAY
The ORIGINAL and BEST!
ALL TRUE CRIME STORIES
LEV GLEASON PUBLISHER - CHARLES BIRO AND BOB WOOD EDITORS
THE MAGAZINE WITH THE MOST GORE PER APPEAR!
DEDICATED TO THE ERADICATION OF CRIME!
Comic House

Blue Beetle #56 (May 1947) contains all the elements of a pre-Code crime comic... including the bloody murder of a stripper.

PERFECT TIMING! EVERYONE ON THE STAGE AND ROSITA BACK HERE FOR A QUICK CHANGE... AND THE WATCHMAN CONVENIENTLY ASLEEP!
HELP! NO... DON'T!
GOT TO, SISTER! YOU'LL MAKE HEADLINES... FOR THE LAST TIME!
AT THAT MOMENT, ACROSS TOWN...
THAT'S THAT! THE FIRST PART OF MY PLAN COMPLETED!

genre bandwagon anyway. While few could match the imaginative scripts and art of Biro and Wood, other publishers worked hard to incorporate more gratuitous violence into their crime books. And as the competition got more violent, so did *Crime Does Not Pay*. Issues #40-70, published during 1945-48 consistently pushed the boundaries to the extreme. Nothing seemed off limits... sexual perversion, pistol whippings, obvious rape, stabbings, throat slitting, maiming, torture... the lurid and bloody pictures told the tale.

A Crime Explosion

The year 1948 saw an incredible proliferation of crime comics at the drug store and newsstand. Victor Fox, comicdom's "king of sleaze," waded in with lurid tales of his own.

His *Crimes By Women*, followed by the provocatively titled *Murder Incorporated* were notable and now highly collectible examples. Ace Magazines came out with *Crime Must Pay the Penalty*, and Hillman with *Crime Detective Comics*. Marvel/Atlas saw a trend, and Martin Goodman waded in with *Crime Exposed* and *Crime Fighters. Authentic Police Cases* and *Crime Reporter* were St. John Publishing's contribution, and Captain Marvel's publisher, Fawcett, produced *On the Spot*, a well-written one-shot comic on the life of Pretty Boy Floyd. Even DC got into the act with a generally sanitized title, *Gang Busters*, which was similar to the earlier Dell/McKay version. And EC brought out *Crime Patrol*.

Charles Biro and company were not pleased. And said so in their readers' letters column. To counter the "imitators" they introduced Crime and Punishment. This was really *Crime Does Not Pay* with a different cover, though *Crime Does Not Pay* had an interlocutor in the form of a very cynical gent called Mr. Crime. A foul looking ghost, he egged his criminal disciples on... "She's lying, Clay, a frill can land you in the hot squat the same as any double crossin' mug can! Heat that poker it'll take guts to burn a doll's face!" Amazing prose to enlighten and educate eight-year-old lads about the proper way to handle relationships with women.

Another example comes from the first story in *Crime Does Not Pay* #61 (March 1948) and concerns "Clay Fogelman. Meanest Man in Crime."

In an effort to make the stories look authentic, the first splash page has a disclaimer written in the illustration: "In consideration of innocent people involved and relatives of others, the names of some characters depicted in this true magazine are fictitious. The Editors." In this case the Fogelman splash page shows him holding a poker over a heated oven with his left hand while his right twists a sobbing girl's arm behind her back. She is wearing a skintight red dress, the shoulder part having slipped down her arm. On the other side of the room, Clay's buddy holds a gun to the girl's husband and cheerfully says: "Sit still, you grease! Your wife asked for it!"

Biro had this knack of making it sound real.

The story begins as Clay calmly shoots his two buddies in the back and head. Clay leans over one of his victims who is lying, face down on the pavement, a liberal amount of blood soaking the ground. "You like to make speeches," Clay smiles, "so now I'll make one! There's a new look in your eyes, Benny! It's the look that comes over a guy's face when the blood's pourin' out of his heart! Too bad you can't hear me!"

Clay drives off. In the car he chortles to himself thinking how lucky he is to have the $60,000 all to himself. He wants to enjoy the money with someone, especially a redhead. Clay has a weakness for redheads and it isn't long before he finds one.

Women had a bad time of it in crime comics. They were either gangster's molls, gun molls, or hapless victims enduring horrors never found in the movies or magazines of the day.

Clay Fogelman's redhead was told in no uncertain terms "not to interfere. "... don't ask questions" and "... do what you're told." She grabs Fogelman by the head and presses him to her lips. "Kiss me!" she breathes. "Kiss me hard, you... you brute!"

A sharp-eyed shop assistant spots the $500 bills Fogelman uses to pay for "redhead's" expensive clothes. The manager calls the police and Clay gets twenty years in prison. Three years later he and another criminal he has befriended in prison escape by slamming a guard over the head with a hefty shovel.

Shortly thereafter, the prison escapees steal a car, hold up a gas station, and shoot the elderly man who owns it. The proprietor's wife, on hearing the shot, runs in and Clay shoots her too.

(Continued on page 56)

Ro

Epitaph for Bert Kahn

By Will Murray

Robert Kahn

An early photo of Bob Kane, circa 1942.

WILL MURRAY: *Up until maybe 30 years ago, there was never any ifs, ands or buts: Bob Kane created Batman. Bill Finger's credits began to emerge when people began to look at the Golden Age of comics with more than just a fan's eye. You've been very generous with crediting Finger with his actual contributions.*

BOB KANE: Definitely.

MURRAY: *There seems to be no controversy between what he recalls and what you recall. More recently, there have been a number of revisionist historians who have been trying to shove you out the door.*

KANE: (*Laughs*) Do you think they ever will? To the victor goes the spoils.

MURRAY: *I doubt it. Walk me through the very earliest moments of the Batman creation. Who walked in the door when, and with what contributions in hand?*

KANE: Now, are you going to verify this with Jerry Robinson? I would just like to know in front because I'm the source, and Bill isn't here, so then you either have to take my word for it or go to Jerry Robinson.

MURRAY: *No. I just want to get your side.*

KANE: The controversy, Will, will go on forever. And all I can say is that I feel I'm the source and I have such conviction as to how it all began, because I am the man who was there before Jerry Robinson, and I knew Bill Finger before Jerry Robinson. He came in after the fact.

MURRAY: *I don't really want to talk about Robinson. I want to talk about the moment of inspiration of Batman.*

KANE: I was in New York at DC Comics doing fill-ins for DC's comics at that time. Before Whitney Ellsworth came in, there was an editor named Vince Sullivan. I was doing slapstick comics, funny drawings like *Mutt and Jeff*, rather than the illustrative type. Superman was born, and the year of '38 was historic. The character changed the whole complexion of the comic book industry at that time. Prior to that, there were many junky comic books filled with comics that just weren't going anywhere. The art was pretty bad, but the neophyte cartoonists at least had a place to show their wares, like Vaudeville before Broadway. In January, 1939, we were speaking and Vince said, "Do you think you could come up with another superhero?" I had shown him sketches of Flash Gordon that I copied. I was a very good copycat. Although I preferred the comic slapstick stuff, I was able to do the illustrative type too if I wanted to adapt.

So I said, "Of course, Vince. How much are they making a week?" I think they were making $800 apiece and I was making $35 or $40 a week. I said, "If I can make their kind of money and come up with a superhero, I sure will." That was on a Friday.

I went home over that weekend. I had three major influences that germinated the idea for Batman—a batman. One was Leonardo DaVinci. He had a flying machine 500 years ago. It was a man on a sled with huge bat wings attached to it. It was the first glider to fly. And I

Kane's "big-eared" prototype Batman from his year before Robin.

The
BAT MAN
BY BOB KANE
... IN THE STRANGE LIVES OF THOSE DENIZENS OF THE HIDDEN WORLD OF CRIME, THE BATMAN, WINGED FIGURE OF VENGEANCE HAS BECOME A MENACE...

BATMAN, DETECTIVE COMICS © 1998 DC

remembered the quote: "Your bird shall have no other wings but that of a bat." I saw that sketch when I was 13 and to me it looked like a Bat-Man.

My second influence was a movie called *The Mark of Zorro* with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. There I got the dual identity. Zorro was kind of a foppish playboy. At night he became a crusader fighting for injustices in the old Spanish West. He would don a stocking mask. He had a sword and he would indelibly imprint a Z on the desperadoes' heads when he had a duel with them. And that was his mark: the Mark of Zorro. I saw this when I was 12 or 13.

The third influence was a movie by Mary Roberts Reinhart called *The Bat Whispers*, with Chester Morris. It was a mystery. The only difference was in the movie, the Bat was a villain. But he wore a bat costume. In the movie you'd see shadows of the Bat throughout. At the very end, it revealed him in a bat costume not unlike my bat costume, later. Five and six years later when I was 18, when Vince Sullivan asked me to come up with a character, I dug these old influences out of my old trunk. I went home and took a figure of Superman and started putting tracings over it. First, I called him the Bird-Man. He had bird wings. And then, I remembered the Bat and the DaVinci sketch. So, I came up with a very crude drawing. However, before I took it in to Vince Sullivan, I called in Bill Finger.

Bill came over on a Sunday and he looked at the sketch. It had stiff bat wings attached to his shoulders to look like a bat. Of course, that would inhibit him in his actions during fighting scenes. So, we rearranged it so that it would become more of a cape and swoop out to look like bat wings in flight, when he was swinging on a rope.

Bill started to make a few revisions with me on that particular Sunday. He said, "Look, you have eyeballs in these slits for the eyes. Why not take the eyeballs out? It will look more mysterious." And he said, "You have little gloves on his hands. Why not put scallops on it?" That came a little later, I think. The first issue didn't have the scallops. The only problem is why he didn't get the byline. He came in kind of after the fact. I had "The Bat-Man" lettered on the page, and the drawing of the figure.

MURRAY: *It was pretty standard not to give the writer credit.*

KANE: The writer in those days didn't get any credit in all of the comic books. Today, they have the letterer, the inker and the colorist. They put their Aunt Tillie on, and their Uncle Jim. Everbody's name is on the strip.

MURRAY: *How different was the first sketch from the final version?*

KANE: I did the cover for the first book and there the wings were attached to his arms. So it pretty much looked like my early sketches with Bill. In the first book, Batman sometimes had the wings stiff, and sometimes he wore a cape. I didn't find my way. In the second and third issues, it started to formulate rather quickly, and mature to where I had Batman

Bob Kane Dies at 83

(as reported by "The Daily Buzz" on AnotherUniverse.com)

Bob Kane, the comic book artist and writer who created the mythic hero Batman, for DC Comics while still in his teens, died at his home in California on Tuesday November 3. He was 83 years old.

The writer, artist, and self-described "doodler" once said that he was inspired by the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci to create the iconic comic book hero. Unlike Superman, who debuted in DC Comics' *Action Comics* #1 in 1938, Batman (who premiered in *Detective Comics* #27 in May 1939) is an ordinary human being.

The now-legendary tale follows a young boy, traumatized by the murder of his parents before his eyes, who vows to avenge their deaths by bringing criminals to justice. A teenage Bruce Wayne uses his vast fortune to study criminology, train his body to athletic perfection, and assemble an assortment of vehicles and weapons to fight crime in his home of Gotham. When he is startled one night by a bat outside his window, he decides to costume himself as a "bat-man", in order to strike fear in the "cowardly and superstitious" hearts of criminals.

Batman proved to be an immediate hit, not only in comic books but in newspaper strips and movie serials. In the ensuing decades, the character would star in DC comic books, animated television series, a hit live-action television show in the 1960s, and four top-grossing Warner Bros. feature films. The toys based on the character have been consistent bestsellers for more than a decade. Batman's image guarantees success in licensed products ranging from t-shirts and Halloween costumes to a NASCAR racecar.

Along with Superman and Wonder Woman, Batman is the only character to remain in continuous publication, with new stories every month, since 1940. Batman currently stars in four monthly comic books (*Batman, Detective Comics, Batman: Shadow Of The Bat* and *Batman: Legends Of The Dark Knight*) as well as appearing in a host of graphic novels and crossovers. He also stars in the current series *The New Batman/Superman Adventures* on Kids' WB! and is poised to leap into the 21st century in the upcoming new animated series *Batman Beyond*.

Besides creating the Dark Knight, Kane was also the cartoonist on the comic series when Robin, the Boy Wonder, made his first appearance as well as the Joker, the Catwoman and the Riddler, among others. Kane also created the television cartoon characters Courageous Cat, Minute Mouse, and Cool McCool. In recent years, he served as a consultant on the Batman films.

Janette Kahn, President and Editor-in-Chief of DC Comics, said, "Bob Kane is a giant in the field of popular culture, one of a handful of people who launched the comic book industry and who gave the world a group of characters so colorful and inventive that they continue to captivate every new generation. Bob will be greatly missed, but he has left a legacy that will keep his memory alive."

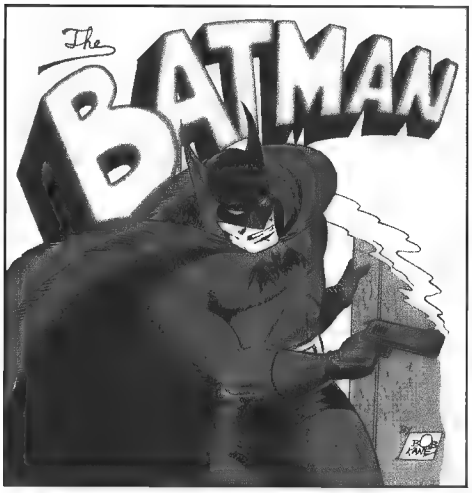
Kane is survived by his wife, Elizabeth Sanders Kane, an actress; his daughter, Ms. Deborah Majeski of New Jersey; his grandson Matthew Alderman, and his sister Ms. Doris Atlas of New York.

Private services were held at Mt. Sinai Memorial in Burbank, Calif. on November 6, 1998. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to "Feed the Children," "Make a Wish Foundation," Westside Children's Center (Santa Monica, CA), Bay Area Youth Center (Hayward, CA) or any agency providing services to hungry, homeless, abused or abandoned children.

pretty much down the way I wanted him. He wore a cape that looked like a bat when he swung out.

MURRAY: *Bill Finger once said that the Batman color scheme was different in the beginning.*

KANE: They were much brighter in the beginning. Bill told me to subdue them. I knew the Bat should be dark and I had a black mask on him, but I think I *might* have had a red union suit instead of the gray one. The initial colors were not the colors that finally emerged.



Batman carried a gun fairly often in his earliest days before DC nixed the concept.

MURRAY: *Did you chose the color scheme, or did DC?*

KANE: I did an overlay on the tracing and brought it down to Vince Sullivan. They used my overlay. I had it down pretty much the way you see it on the *Detective Comics* cover.

MURRAY: *What was Sullivan's initial reaction to Batman? He was looking for another Superman. Instead he got Batman.*

KANE: No, he wasn't looking for another Superman. He was looking for another *superhero*. He said "like a Superman." Not to copy it, but to emulate it. He flipped. He said, "This is it! This is terrific! I love it!" And he brought it to my publishers, Jack Liebowitz and Harry Donenfeld, and they said, "Well, it looks OK to us. We're not exactly art experts, but why don't you try it in an issue to see how it goes?"

Considered by many to be greatest early Batman cover in the Detective Comics run, a high-grade copy of #29 recently sold for many multiples of Guide.

It caught on almost immediately. I would say it caught on even more so when Robin was created a year later. Robin helped it considerably. But the first year, Batman was a loner and more like a vampire. We had vampirish, Dracula-like stories. For some reason we followed the bat theme. Batman fought the Monk and weird supernatural villains.

MURRAY: *How did you come up with Robin?*

KANE: I got that from Robin Hood. Despite what Jerry Robinson said, that he got it from Robinson. The influence of the costume was from Robin Hood. He wears the tunic and boots of Robin Hood. That was my initial costume. I put a cape on him. That's why I called him Robin, because he was fighting against injustice just as Robin Hood was, along with Batman.

MURRAY: *Why do you think Robin's introduction help sales?*

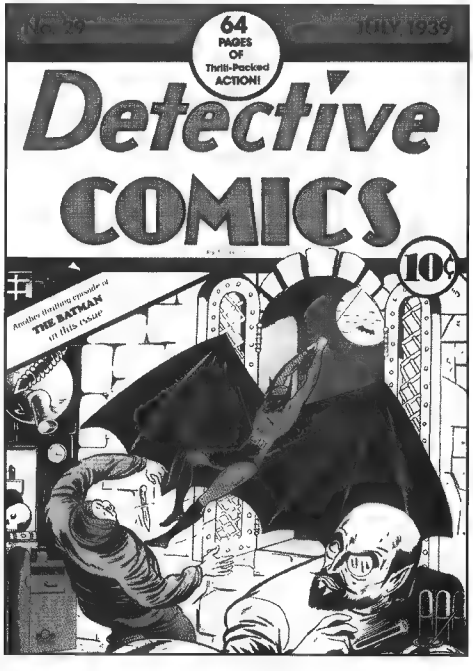
KANE: That's easy. I felt that every boy of 13 or 14 would love to fight alongside of a superhero. In their wish-fulfillment, they'd like to be a superhero. So instead of waiting to grow up to be a superhero's age of 32 or 35, I thought a boy wonder fighting alongside in a costume would fulfill that wish. There was another boy-wonder, but he wasn't a superhero. That was Junior, in *Dick Tracy*. I think he preceded Robin. Mine was the first superhero boy-wonder.

MURRAY: *Who is your favorite Batman villain?*

KANE: The Joker is beyond a shadow of a doubt the greatest villain Bill and I ever created. He's what Professor Moriarity was to Sherlock Holmes. He's a tremendous villain.

MURRAY: *How did he come about?*

KANE: Bill and I were sitting around and I believe we both came up with the Joker. We were talking about getting a supervillain who would play perennial, but deathly, jokes on the Batman—jokes that would be killing and not just comedy pranks. We discussed a Joker character, and Bill came to me with a picture of Conrad Veidt from *The Man Who Laughs*. It's a story by Victor Hugo, about a boy who had his face slashed into a ghastly grin by gypsy surgeons when he was 13. He grew up having funereal eyes—he was tortured—but the mouth has this perpetual ghastly grin. It was a movie. In fact, Bill and I went to see the movie at that time. He looked exactly like the Joker I drew. Bill said, "This is the face of the Joker." And that's exactly what I copied. I just gave him more hair. In fact, the Joker I drew in *Batman* #1 was not the caricature clown that it became by ghost artists. I had him realistically drawn, like the photo.



MURRAY: *Controversy continually swirls around his creation. Jerry Robinson says he brought in a Joker playing card, inspiring a new Batman villain.*

KANE: I'll just minutely minimize Jerry's part. Jerry came in maybe six or nine months later on, with the Joker playing card. Had Jerry come in earlier, then my answer is: Then why didn't the Joker look like the playing card jester? If he came to me with the jester card, why didn't he look like the jester rather than Conrad Veidt? I can only refute it that way. I don't know where Jerry gets this card. The card we used a few times as the Joker's trademark, but we dropped that after two or three stories.

MURRAY: *How did you work with Bill Finger?*

KANE: The foundation of the empire was Bill's stories and my drawing. We worked on them together. I created some of the villains with him, and he created some on his own. I would talk the stories over with Bill beforehand, so a lot of the stories were mine as well as Bill's, but he did literally the writing. I'll tell you what was so great about Bill. He would present photographs of the Statue of Liberty, or trains if he had trains, and all I'd have to do is copy the statue. He's be the only writer who'd give you clips. And that made it so convenient. He did come up with many of the villains. And he came up with the origin of Bruce Wayne with me. I'm sorry in retrospect I didn't give him a byline. He deserved more. He never made a great living. They didn't pay very much per page in those days. Eight dollars a page. He was underpaid. And he died broke. And his scripts came in slow. You'd have to bite your nails until you got a complete story out of him.

MURRAY: *It's too bad he isn't here to share in all this.*

KANE: Yeah, I really feel he is the unsung hero of Batman. He certainly would have clarified the Jerry Robinson thing, with the Joker. I really wish he were here to clear the air. He's the only one who could have.

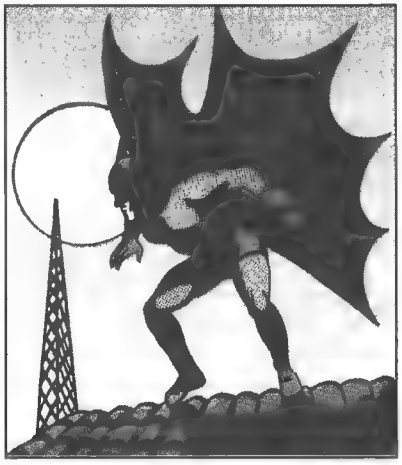
MURRAY: *Who were the other Batman writers of the early days?*

KANE: God, we had so many of them. The only writer that I can recall is Gardner Fox, who came in early. He was an intellectual writer, but he didn't have the pizazz of a Bill Finger. Jack Schiff did. But he never had a story that was as good as any of Bill Finger's stories. And after that, I don't know who else wrote them.

MURRAY: *You worked with two major DC editors in the early days, Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff. Tell me about them.*

KANE: Mort was a writer. He was an intellect. He used to write a lot of the Superman stories in those days. I think hands-on Jack Schiff was more the Batman editor than Mort was. Mort was more into Superman. The stories in those days didn't have the in-depth quality that they had later in the '80s and '90s. They were lighter. Jack had Space things. He got away from the Batman persona somehow. He got off track. The best era was when Bill Finger wrote the stories with me.

They wrote themselves and Jack would OK almost anything Bill brought in. But when Bill stopped writing it and Jack took over and started in with outer space stuff, it became too cartoony. They got away from the dramatics of what Batman was all about. But Bill had it down pat. He was a pulp writer. He loved Doc Savage, Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, and *The Man Who Laughs*.



The early Batman alternated between the "caped" look and the "winged" look.

MURRAY: *Were you also influenced by the pulps?*

KANE: Yes. As a matter of fact, I read all the pulps that Bill Finger read. He'd give me his magazines and I did read them. I was influenced by Doc Savage and the pulps, to some extent. And I loved mystery movies, like *The Phantom of the Opera* with Lon Chaney. I was a real movie buff as a kid. That influenced me to create Batman like a movie serial. Batman is like a movie serial. When I was a kid I couldn't wait for next Saturday. I was very influenced by the early movie serials. I drew Batman in a serialized form.

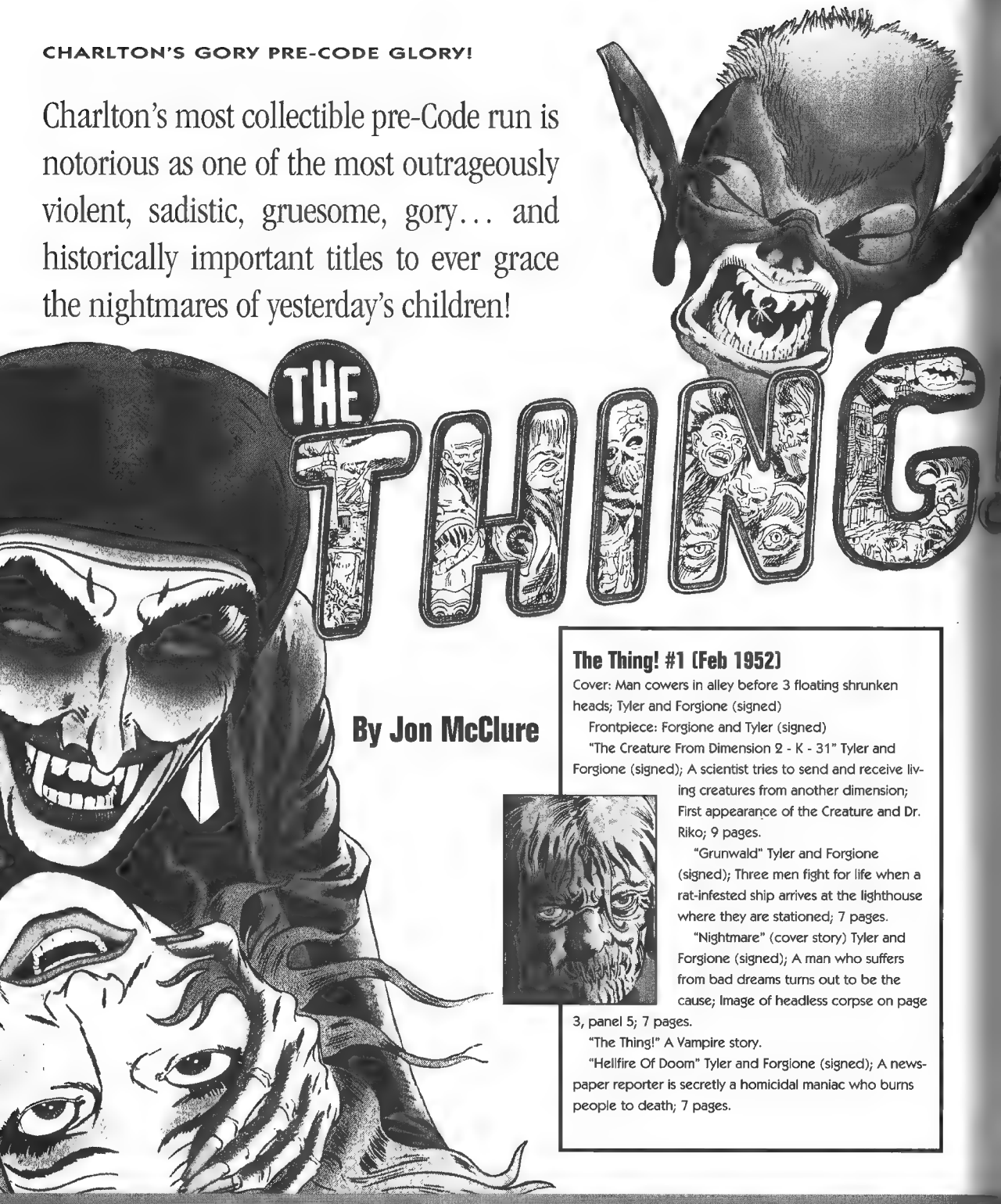
MURRAY: *Is it correct to say that Bill Finger came up with the other side of Batman—the Bruce Wayne side?*

KANE: I think we thought of that together, because I

(Continued on page 52)

CHARLTON'S GORY PRE-CODE GLORY!

Charlton's most collectible pre-Code run is notorious as one of the most outrageously violent, sadistic, gruesome, gory… and historically important titles to ever grace the nightmares of yesterday's children!



By Jon McClure

The Thing! #1 (Feb 1952)

Cover: Man cowers in alley before 3 floating shrunken heads; Tyler and Forgione (signed)

Frontpiece: Forgione and Tyler (signed)

"The Creature From Dimension 2 - K - 31" Tyler and Forgione (signed); A scientist tries to send and receive living creatures from another dimension; First appearance of the Creature and Dr. Riko; 9 pages.

"Grunwald" Tyler and Forgione (signed); Three men fight for life when a rat-infested ship arrives at the lighthouse where they are stationed; 7 pages.

"Nightmare" (cover story) Tyler and Forgione (signed); A man who suffers from bad dreams turns out to be the cause; Image of headless corpse on page 3, panel 5; 7 pages.

"The Thing!" A Vampire story.

"Hellfire Of Doom" Tyler and Forgione (signed); A newspaper reporter is secretly a homicidal maniac who burns people to death; 7 pages.

The first issue of *The Thing!* hit the stands cover dated February 1952, shortly after the Sci-Fi/Horror classic *The Thing* appeared in theaters. The original film, starring James Arness as the monster was later remade (with Rob Bottin's special effects) in the 1980s by John Carpenter, an admitted EC fan. Both films were based on the 1938 John W. Campbell Jr. story "Who Goes There?"

Unlike EC's story hosts, the horror host "The Thing" narrates Charlton's horror comic without ever making an appearance, speaking from darkened doorways and from under rocks, sometimes not commenting at all, yet in less than three years and with only 17 issues, *The Thing*! carved a permanent and significant place in pre-Code history as one of the most violent, sadistic, gruesome, and gory comics to ever grace the nightmares of yesterday's children!

There are plenty of outrageously violent and gory horror and crime comic books to delight in from the early 1950s. One of the highest "compliments" to a publisher's inadvertent contribution to the formation of the Comics Code (the industry's self-imposed censorship agenda conceived to evade total extinction), was a mention in Fredric Wertham's *Seduction Of The Innocent* (*SOTI*). The thing qualifies for a mention not only because of its violence and gore, but also because of its racial slurs that are sprinkled among the stories. Citing just one of the several examples, the first story of issue #1, "The Creature From Dimension 2 - K - 31," contains the following dialogue on page 9, panel 5: "I don't know what happened, Colonel...There wasn't a Gook in sight...".

As for art credits, they are nothing short of historic! Some stories are unsigned but appear to be drawn by *The Thing!* regulars like Vincent Alascia,

Issue #12's Cinderella contains heaping helpings of classic Ditko art... plus outrageous pre-Code sadism and torture.

BLUD, ONCE AGAIN, DEAR READERS... THIS TIME I BRING YOU A CHOICE SELECTION FROM MY VOLUME OF EERIE FAIRY-TALES... A WELL-KNOWN PLOT GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU SUSPENSE. IN THE ALWAYS A KICK OUT OF IT WHEN I READ A KICK I'M SURE YOU'LL LEAVE YOU GASPING AND WANTING... FOR IN FRONT OF YOU NOW IS...
CINDERELLA
The Thing
HIT HER! WHIP HER! HEH, HEH... THAT'S IT, MY PRETTY DARLINGS! SHOW HER WHY SHE MUST OBEY US!
LET US DRAIN HER OF ALL HER BLOOD, MOTHER... PLEASE... LET US... JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE!
OHH.. NO... NO!
DITKO

The Thing! #2 (Apr 1952)

Cover: A king holding a sword is menaced by a ghostly cadaver; Bob Forgione (signed)

Frontpiece: Tyler and Belfi (signed)

"The Red Death" (cover story) Bob Forgione (signed); Parody of Poe's "Mask Of The Red Death" has evil king saying on page 3, panel 1, "Ho-Ho-Ho! Look at their heads roll around in the dirt!"

"El Toro Diablo" Tyler and Forgione (signed); A tormented bullfighter tries to change his destiny by having surgery on his ugly face; 9 pages.

"The Witch's House" (2 page text only story)

"The Creature" Tyler and Forgione (signed); Creature from Dimension 2 - K-31 saves the earth; only continued story in run; 7 pgs.

"The White Rat" Bob (Forgione) and Al (Tyler) (signed); A scientist is tormented by an abusive assistant until his growth formula saves him... or does it?
8 pgs.

"Impossible?" Inside back cover; two supposedly true stories; John Belfi (signed).

The Thing! #3 (Jun 1952)

Cover: A demon emerges from a mirror to strangle a man; Albert Tyler (signed).

Frontpiece: "Weird Wonders" 3 stories, John Belfi (signed).

"The Clutch Of Doom" Bob Forgione (signed); A mansion is under the curse of a dead murderer; 8 pgs.

"Ghost Town Ghost" Belfi & Giordano (signed); Western murderers steal a prospector's gold only to be haunted by his ghost; 4 pages.

"The Marching Dead Men" Bob Forgione (signed); Dead men fight a war in Mongolia; 7 pages.

"What Was It!" (2 pg. text only story).

"Crypt Of The Vampire" Martin (signed); Smugglers hide in a castle pretending to be vampires, until a real one kills them; 5 pages.

"Mirror, Mirror, On The Wall" (cover story) Tyler (signed); A drug smuggler conjures demons from a magic mirror to kill for him; 6 pages.

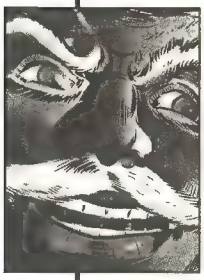
"Things You Should Know" Top ½ IBC; (unsigned).

ALL COVERS & CHARACTERS © CHARLTON PUBLICATIONS

ART BY THE LEGENDARY STEVE DITKO!

The Thing! #4 (Aug 1952)

Cover: A deathly figure walks through a stormy night; Al Fago (signed).



Frontpiece: "Things You Should Know" Giordano (signed).

"I Was A Zombie" (cover story) Al Fago, unsigned; A man is turned into a zombie to be a slave for an evil plantation owner; 8 pages.

"The Promise Of Ying Ko" Tyler (signed); A man returns from the dead to save his friend from being killed; Headless corpse page 7, panel 3; 7 pgs.

"Unseen Thing" (2 page text story).

"Petrified Ghost" (unsigned); A ghost takes over a stone statue to take his revenge; 5 pgs.

"Partners In Death" John Belfi (signed); A man is haunted by the business partner he murdered; 6 pgs.

"Twins Of Doom" (unsigned); A twin brother experiences his brother's death and helps to identify the killer; 4 pages.

"Things You Should Know" Top 1/2 inside back cover (unsigned).

The Thing! #5 (Oct/Nov 1952)

Cover: A headless corpse menaces a woman in the bowels of a a wax museum; Lou Morales (signed).

Frontpiece: Lou Morales (signed).

"Curse Of Karnak" Bob Forgione (signed); A determined professor opens the tomb of an ancient mummy to find unexpected horror; 8 pages.

"Harmony Of Horror" Bob Forgione (signed); A murdered pianist returns from the dead for revenge; 6 pgs.

"The Frustrated Ghost" (2 page text story).

"Murderer's Row" (cover story) unsigned; the famous killers in a wax museum may be doing more than standing around at night; 9 pages.

"The Tavern Of Terror" Collier (signed); Loose parody of the mid-19th century and very popular story "Varney The Vampire"; 7 pages.

"Things You Should Know" Top ½ inside back cover; 3 stories; Lou Morales (signed).

John Belfi, Al Fago, Bob Forgione, and Lou Morales. Al Fago acted as editor and artist, drawing the cover of #4, and the first story as well. Alascia did a lot of work for Charlton in 1953, including love, sci-fi, war, and western stories. Beyond the pre-Code pages of *The Thing!*, Dick Ayers produced horror stories for Marvel in 1954 and Belfi drew horror stories for Harvey from 1953-54. Sid Check produced crime and horror for EC in 1952 and for Marvel in 1954. The incredible Steve Ditko did some now historic work for Farrell's *Fantastic Fears* in 1953, and the same year drew for Prize's *Black Magic*, finally publishing his first cover with *The Thing!* #12, cover dated February 1954.

And the list goes on. The underrated and creative Bob Forgione did crime stories for Charlton in 1953-54, and horror for Marvel the same years. Stephen Kirkel, AKA "Kirk," produced crime and horror stories for Youthful from 1951-54. Seymour Moskowitz produced crime and horror for Charlton from 1953-55, and crime for Marvel in 1954. Anthony Tallarico drew horror stories for Friedman from 1952-54, and for Youthful in 1952. And the almost-unknown Al Tyler, John Belfi's cousin, drew crime stories for Charlton in 1954.

Other interesting trivia about the Charlton series include:

• Sometimes the word "Thing" appears in sentences enhanced with darker letters in interior stories and narratives.

• The cover logo has scenes of horror which occur inside the letters (issues 1-12).

• Issues #1-2 were listed on the title page as published by Song Hits, Inc., which is actually the name of a Charlton black and white fan magazine containing photos and pictures of Frank Sinatra and other musical celebrities of the day. Issues #3-4 are listed as published by Outstanding Comics, Inc., and #5-10 are claimed by Capitol Stories, Inc. Issue #11 finally shows the Charlton name in the title page, where it remains *(Continued on page 66)*

A rampaging robot crushes the head of its evil inventor in "Operation Massacre" (issue #9, Jul 1953, mentioned in SOTI)

The Thing #1 (Feb 1952)

The Thing #2 (Apr 1952)

The Thing #3 (Jun 1952)

The Thing #4 (Aug 1952)

The Thing #5 (Oct/Nov 1952)

The Thing #6 (Jan 1953)

The Thing #7 (Mar 1953)

The Thing #8 (May 1953)

The Thing #9 (Jul 1953)

THE THING © CHARLTON

The Thing #10 (Sep 1953)▲

The Thing #11 (Nov/Dec 1953) ▲

#14 (Jun 1954) ▼

#15 (Jul/Aug 1954)▼

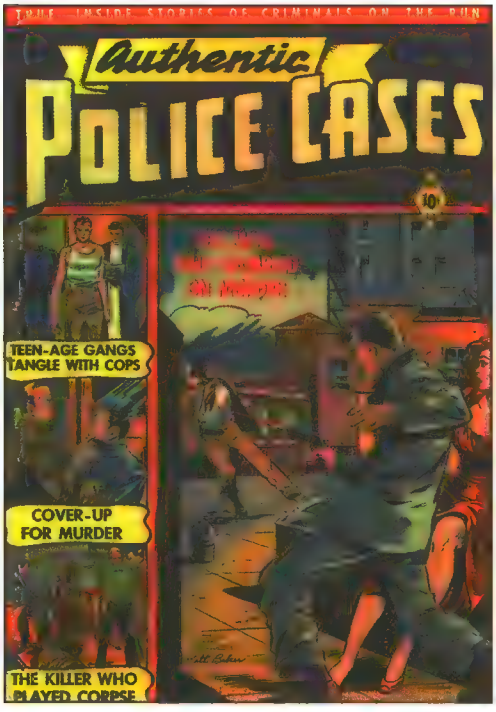
The Thing #12 (Feb 1954)▲

#16 (Sep 1954) ▼

The Thing #13 (Apr 1954) ▲

#17 (Nov 1954) ▼

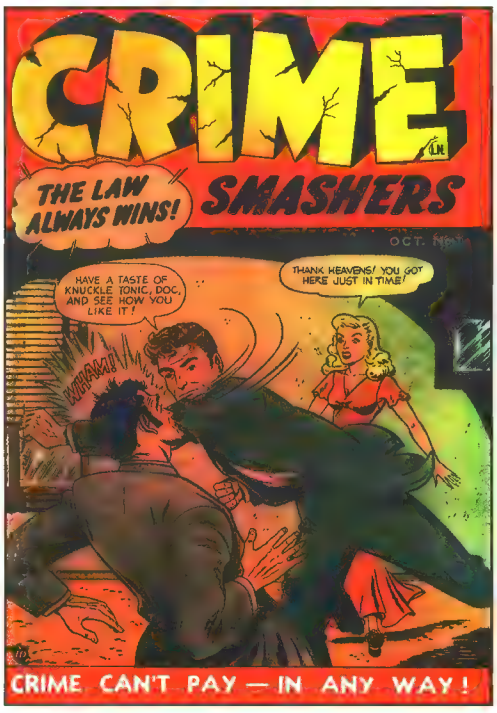
Claire Voyant #4 (1946) ▲

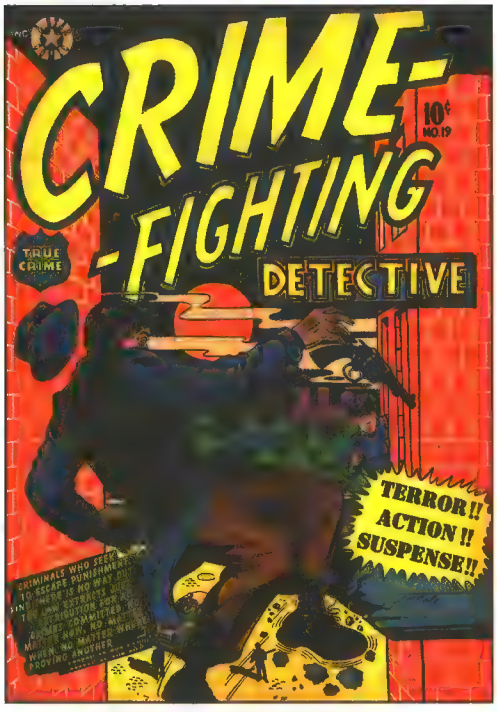


Authentic Police Cases #16 (Dec 1951) ▲

▼ Crime Reporter #2 (Oct 1948)

▼ Crime Smashers #1 (Oct 1950)

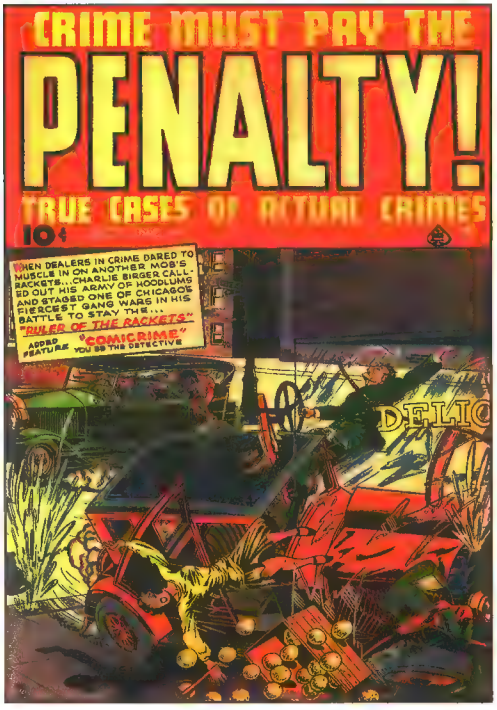

CRIME
SMASHERS
THE LAW ALWAYS WINS!
OCT.
HAVE A TASTE OF KNUCKLE TONIC, DOC, AND SEE HOW YOU LIKE IT!
THANK HEAVENS! YOU GOT HERE JUST IN TIME!
KRAKK!
CRIME CAN'T PAY — IN ANY WAY!



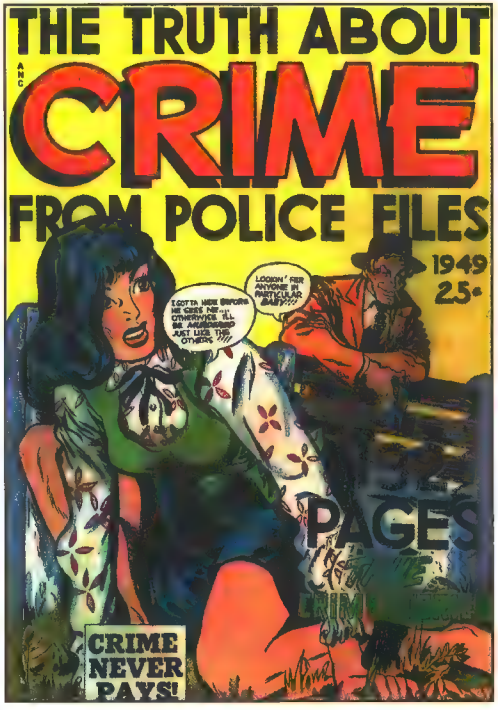
Crime-Fighting Detective #19 (Jun 1952) ▲

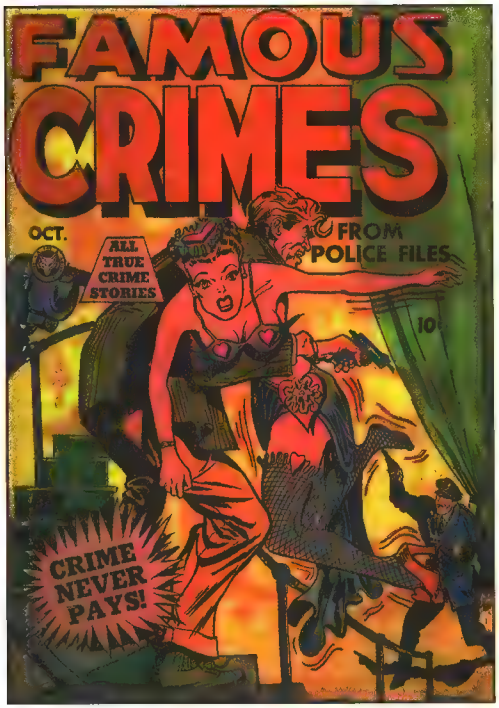
Crime & Punishment #1 (Apr 1948, indicia: Dec '47) ▲

▼ Crime Must Pay The Penalty! #4 (Oct 1948)

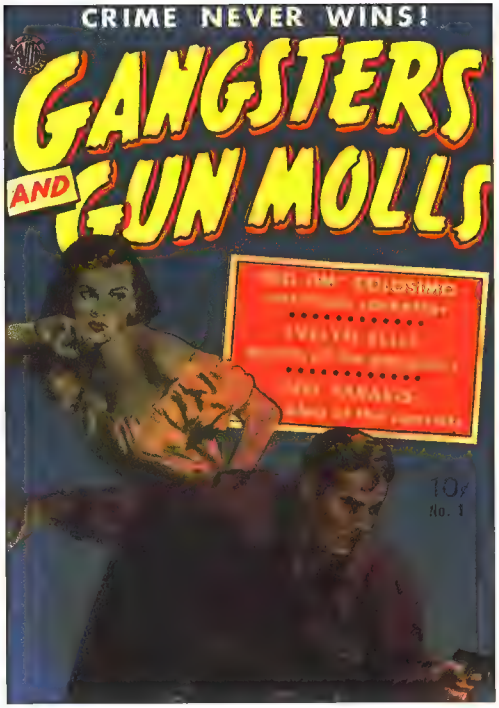

CRIME MUST PAY THE
PENALTY!
TRUE CASES OF ACTUAL CRIMES
10¢
WHEN DEALERS IN CRIME DARED TO MUSCLE IN ON ANOTHER MOB'S RACKETS...CHARLIE BIRGER CALLED OUT HIS ARMY OF HOODLUMS AND STABBED ONE OF CHICAGO'S FIERCEST GANG WARS IN HIS BATTLE TO STAY THE...
"RULES OF THE RACKETS"
ADDED FEATURE "COMICRIME" YOU BE THE DETECTIVE

▼ The Truth About Crime (1949)





Famous Crimes #3 (Oct 1948) ▲

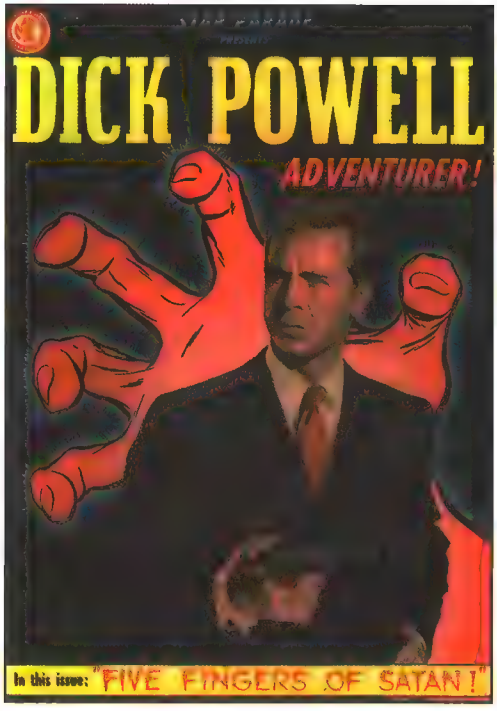


Gangsters and Gun Molls #1 (Sep 1951) ▲

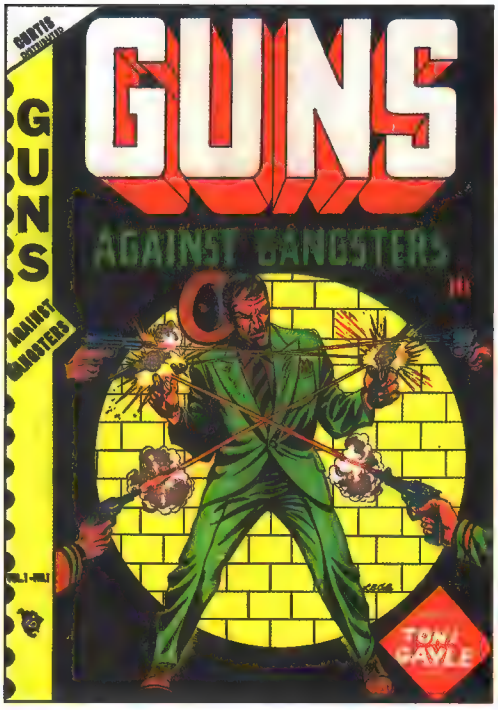
▼ Headline Comics #27 (v3#3, Nov/Dec 1947)

THE F.B.I. IN THRILLING ACTION
No. 27
10¢
HEADLINE COMICS
NOV.DEC.
CRIME NEVER PAYS
TRUE FAMOUS DETECTIVE CASES
STAND BACK, YOU SAWBONES!! I'M OPERATING ON THIS COPPER!... ONLY HE WON'T BE ALIVE AFTER I GIVE 'IM THE LEAD TREATMENT!!

▼ Ken Shannon #8 (Dec 1952)

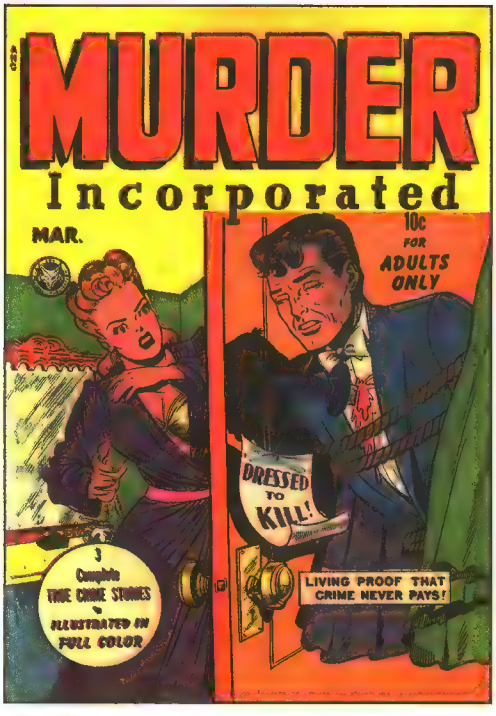


Star Parade Prsnts Dick Powell, Adv. (A-1 #22, 1949) ▲

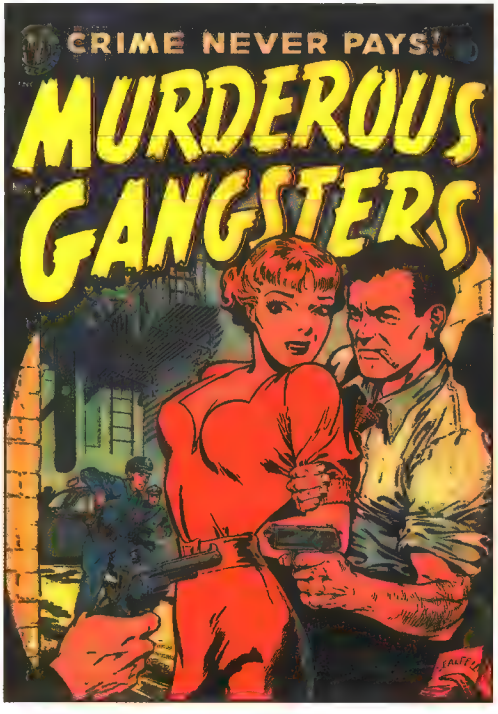


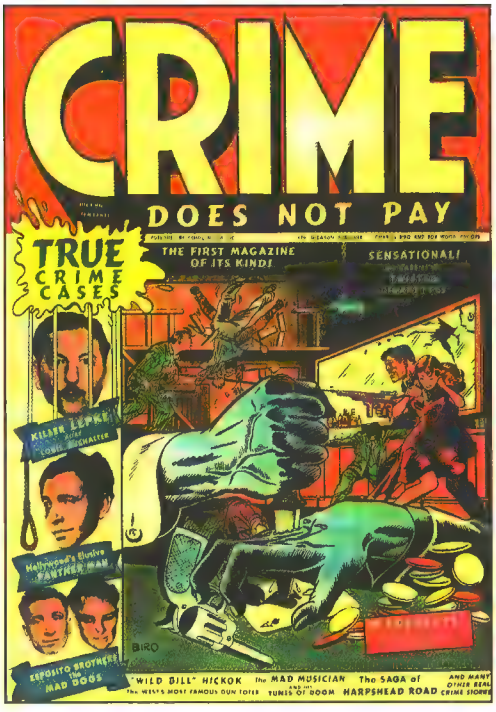
Guns Against Gangsters #1 (Sep/Oct 1948) ▲

▼ Murder Incorporated #2 (Mar 1948)



▼ Murderous Gangsters #1 (Jul 1951)





Crime Does Not Pay #22 (Jun 1942) ▲

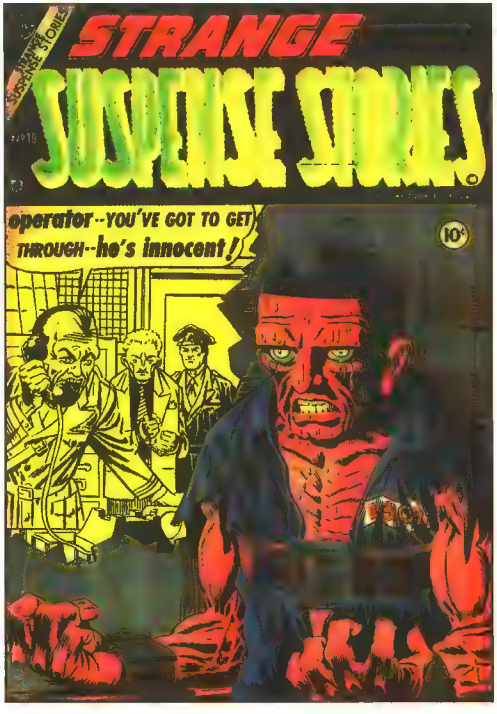
EXPOSED
TRUE CRIME CASES
Vol. 1 No. 1
10¢
NAG..NAG.. I'LL TEACH YOU TO NAG!
JIM-DON'T YOU'RE KILLING ME!
CORPSES CASH AND CARRY – DEATH THUMBS A RIDE
INSIDE WITNESS – LEGEND of the LONE WOLF

Exposed True Cime Cases #1 (Mar/Apr 1948) ▲

▼ Manhunt #2 (Nov 1947)

THRILLING ACTION! – GRIM SUSPENSE! – CRIME AND CRIME SMASHING! – TALES OF THE F. B. I. – SCOTLAND YARD – THE NORTHWEST MOUNTIES! – SECRET SERVICE!
MANHUNT
No 2
NOVEMBER 1947
10¢
DINNER DATE WITH DEATH
SEE NEXT PAGE

▼ Strange Suspense Stories #19 (Jul 1954)



The Case AGAINST the Comics

Reprinted from the study by Gabriel Lynn, Catechetical Guild, 1944, St. Paul, Minnesota

In presenting an unbiased case against the comics, it is only fair to state that there are some commendable comics with genuine "kid appeal" or "adult appeal"—lamentably few and hopelessly outnumbered by those for which no practical justification may be advanced.

Into the "kid appeal" category fall such strips as "Mickey Mouse," "The Teenie Weenies," "Peter Rabbit," "Uncle Wiggly" and, generally speaking, all the animal comics. Into the "adult appeal" group fall "Little Lulu," "Blondie," "They'll Do It Every Time," and so on. But for adventure strips masquerading as "comics" and having only moron appeal there remain the incriminating words of the case against the comics. —Inside Back Cover

Inside Front Cover

This pamphlet presents its case specifically against adventure strips and moronic creations parading under the banner of "comics." The case is against "so-called comics" which fail to meet the wholesome standard of good recreational reading; it is not a wholesale condemnation of "comics" per se.

The fact still remains, however, that many parents, misled by the ring of the word "comics," are unaware of the damage done by the moronic type. In view of this, we present Mr. Lynn's urgent plea to do something about the problem.

If your school has a Parent-Teacher group, you will want to make this pamphlet available to the organization. Copies will be sold below cost, at 3¢ each in lots of ten or more. Single copies 5¢.

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Catechetical Guild

128. E. 10th St., St. Paul 1, Minn.

Foreword

Parents concerned with the growing problem of juvenile delinquency might do well to give close scrutiny to a contributing factor found in nearly every American home today—the misnamed comics and the multiple newspaper comic strips.

In order to determine whether there is any correlation between juvenile delinquency and the comics an exhaustive study and analysis of 92 comic books and more than 1,000 newspaper comic strips was made.

The facts and conclusions which follow in this *Case Against The Comics* are based on this survey and are of a nature to warrant the most thoughtful consideration of parents.

The conclusions concerning the content matter, the manner in which many of the comic books are merchandised and the organized campaign to lull the fears of parents and educators should be cause for judicious reflection.

—Gabriel Lynn

I: Statement of the Case Against the Comics

Children, in increasing numbers, are arrested by police and juvenile authorities for the theft of merchandise from markets and other retail establishments. These unhappy youngsters have not lacked expert schooling in the methods used in such circumstances. The technique is depicted regularly in the comic-strip adventures of master chiselers, swindlers, and ne'er-do-wells.

Concerned observers are increasingly distressed by the problem of scantily attired girls of high-school age. Perhaps they have been reading and studying a comic saga adequately summed up in the words of the gray-haired mistress of a band of sharpers: "Bring on the suckers!" The title page describes this charmer with the legend: "She's rough, tough and nasty!" In the 31 panels of the particular episode studied there is supplied a detailed description of the measures employed in swindling victims. This character poses with abandoned seductiveness to lure susceptible males with the brazen invitation of her exaggeratedly female body. She employs "spiritualism" to hoodwink deluded women. Only an attempted holdup by gangsters brings the police and lands her in a cell. Good has triumphed—but not too definitely. The concluding panel hastens to assure the reader that next month will bring more "thrilling adventures"

with this so-called "heroine."

In spite of the ultimate victory over evil which is the standard formula employed in nearly all of the comic books, this conquest by good almost invariably is deferred until the final action. The preceding portions, making up most of the whole, are devoted to the depiction of horror, assault, thinly veiled seduction, mayhem, sadism, murder, and extra-legal activities going counter to every basic principle of American liberty.

The standards of thought and behavior encountered in those portions in which the plot is unfolded are almost without exception bad. Violence is glorified. In the 92 comic books included in this study, deeds of minor or major violence were found illustrated in no fewer than 91 per cent! It must be emphasized that the one element which receives wholly disproportionate treatment in the comics is violence. Again and again scenes of physical assault, savage brutality, sadistic tortures are shown.

Parents of young children have frequently been obliged to withhold comic books of this nature from youngsters whose nervous excitement was so great as to prevent sleep. In an effort to abate the alarm of parents, an argument is offered by one group of apologists for the comics who declare: "psychologists point out that it is not the comics which create fear or distress, but rather the child's own neurotic fantasy which fastens upon the pictured people and creatures to objectify his fears. A child who lies awake nights because of frightening stories, whether in comics or classics, presents special problems which call for careful consideration not in relation to his reading alone but to more fundamental emotional needs."* *Child Study, Summer, 1943.

This statement receives little support from majority opinion. These unnamed psychologists claim the problem is traceable to more "fundamental emotional needs"—not saying just what these needs are, and leaving undeveloped the fact that every growing child presents an emotional problem.

Consider the case of seven-year-old Helen whose mother hastened to her bed when she heard the child weeping hysterically and in a panic of fear. Helen had been poring over a horror comic book early in the evening, one in which a monstrosity had suddenly "grown" several heads and arms and hands and had proceeded, unaided, to capture a band of evildoers after first subjecting these criminals to savage physical assaults. When she quite naturally cried out and became fearful in the darkened room, she presented no "special problem." Her "fundamental emotional need" was only for parents wise enough to do what her parents did do: shut off the supply of comic books.

It must further be recognized that the comic books in far too many instances are a menace to chastity, a fact equally applicable to many newspaper strips. There is a tendency to present female

characters scantily attired and with their sexual characteristics emphasized to the extent of exaggeration. Male heroes are often clad in garments which stress their masculinity. Episodes abound in which relations between the sexes are given lewdly provocative treatment and there is often a furtively latent rather than overt suggestiveness which is extremely likely to stimulate unwholesome sexual curiosity in the young.

There is an additional sexual menace in the frequency with which physically abnormal characters are presented. Such monstrosities and the unnatural situations in which they are depicted tend toward the development of the unhealthy mental state which is recognized as favorable to the growth of serious sexual disturbances. The behavior of these abnormal persons—in the episodes in which are enacted the evil eventually to be overcome by good—tends to pervert moral character, thus providing fertile soil for the growth of sadistic and masochistic traits. Schrenck-Notzing coined the term "algolagnia" to describe the connection between sexual excitement and pain. Dr. John Rathbone Oliver, associate in medicine on the faculty of Johns Hopkins University, records his observation of the excited lustfully gloating intentness with victims of algolagniacal urges watch any type of action, real or portrayed, in which pain is inflicted by one person upon another. While such discussions are properly to be reserved for clinical circles, it is manifest that children should not be permitted to form reading habits which may with the passing of time develop into tragically serious conditions.

A large number of the comic books depict the heroic adventures of one or more characters whose philosophy may only be described as un-American and in a few instances, anarchistic. The vigilante spirit is rife in the comics: the gestapo method is glorified. A plot-pattern is used by many script-writers with a self-imposed mission to correct injustices, to eradicate evil and its practitioners. Throughout subsequent episodes he will be shown ferreting out criminals, determining their guilt, pronouncing judgment, inflicting punishment—usually capital—upon them, all this without references to due processes of law. Always, in these sequences, the offenses committed by the malefactors are portrayed in such detail as to constitute a veritable handbook of criminal techniques for impressionable young readers.

An important part of what we proudly esteem as "The American Way" has to do with our lawfully established methods of dealing with lawbreakers. We set up and maintain police organizations, prosecuting attorneys, grand juries, judges and trial juries, and have created an elaborate series of safeguards to assure than no man, however grave his offense, shall be tried, convicted, and punished except by due process of law. Any limitation placed upon these safeguards constitutes a threat to the perpetuation of American liberties and represents a step toward the type of oppression of which Adolf Hitler stands as a current symbol.

Of late, there has been a tendency on the part of comics to glorify characters who are engaged in crusading activities which infringe upon these liberties. Even harmless appearing child "commandos" act in the comics, as investigating police officers, as grand juries, as trial judges and

juries, and, in certain instances, as jailers and even as executioners. The individuals upon whom all of these illegal attentions are visited are, of course, shown to be lawbreakers—but where in all the body of our laws is to be found provision for such action by volunteer vigilante groups working outside the regularly constituted agencies of law and order?

Manifestly the ultimate result of a steady diet of such fare must be to condition the child mind for a philosophy akin to that fostered by the dictators. Certainly all of it is in conflict with the standards and principles of the United States and of our democratic form of government. It is one of the noble and inspiring tenets of our national creed that it is better that a hundred guilty persons should escape than that one innocent individual should unjustly suffer—and to this principle the whole spirit of vigilante procedure is in opposition. The vigilante spirit is the mob spirit, the Ku-Klux spirit, the unleashing of wild, unreasoning passions to deal with situations which call for the calm deliberation and impartial judgments which are provided by our laws.

It is a serious count in the indictment of the comic books and strips that they do violence to this American principle. The sensational exploits of individuals or groups engaged in executing masked and hooded justice have provided profitable for the purveyors of comic books, but this fact remains unshaken: No matter how despicable the villains against whom this "justice" is aimed, no matter how triumphant the final defeat of vice by virtue, it is neither Christian nor American to permit the young to be taught in this way the pernicious totalitarian doctrine that the end justifies the means. This is, in a majority of all the instances studied in this survey, the principle upon which the creators of the comic-book characters operate, and it is a wicked fallacy toward whose exposure every generation of Americans from the time of George Washington has contributed, many with their lives.

Another serious objection to many of the comics is that they depict characters and situations which bear no practical relation to real life and real persons.

The immature mind, raptly following these fantastic adventures, becomes ill prepared for the realities of existence. The world of the comics is, in the main, an incredible world of make-believe, with heroes utterly heroic and villains unrelievedly villainous. In this respect the comics recognize but two tones: a spotless white and an inky black. There are no grays. The effect of this upon the child moving toward maturity must be damaging.

One need not go beyond the newspaper comics to obtain corroboration of this. In real life, the "hero" of one particular strip would rarely if ever be outside of jail. His activities, between amorous interludes with waitresses and chorus girls, consist almost entirely of swindling operations of one variety or another. A feminine character in the same strip is regularly shown engaging in escapades suggestive of adultery. A recent chapter dealt with the reappearance of one of her former suitors who was promptly taken into her home as a "boarder," and the ensuing episodes could scarcely fail to suggest even to youthful readers that her relations with her returned admirer exceeded in intimacy the conventional landlady-border connection. The youthful brother of the "hero" in real life, would assuredly be a regular ward of the authorities dealing with juvenile delinquents, so lawless and antisocial are his exploits.

No attempt is made by the artist or writer of this "comic" plot to suggest that this misbehavior is anything but "smart," or that retribution awaits the wrongdoer. It appears daily and Sunday in a large number of newspapers and also in comic-book format—evil consistently "outsmarts" good.

There is the further sexual danger in such comic books that they condition the youthful reader for the openly salacious literature which has become so grave a menace to American youth. The youthful comic-book addict soon finds that he craves ever stronger and more vicious faire for his thrill-jaded appetite. Like the drug addict, he begins with the comparatively light dose afforded by certain of the comics and then, after a conditioning interval, seeks more extreme material. He then becomes a ready "prospect" for the peddlers of the indescribably vile pornographic literature concerning the widespread sale of which Courtney Ryley Cooper has convincingly written in his invaluable book, *Designs in Scarlet*. Such vulgar books and pamphlets depict the men and women made popular in the regular comic books and strips as engaging in unspeakably obscene behavior. Mr. Cooper, an observer and investigator thoroughly hardened and "seasoned"—or so he believed himself to be at the outset of his investigations into this evil which covered a period of more than a year—found himself sickened by the widespread prevalence of this highly organized corruption of American youth. In roadhouses and other resorts where mere children nightly gathered to engage in forbidden drinking, improper dancing, and general dissipation, the peddlers of obscene literature were almost invariably present and active.

Children do not walk until they have learned to crawl. Neither do adolescents plunge abruptly into the slime of such depraved pornography without having first undergone a term of conditioning in which they have been led, step by step, to the extremes which Mr. Cooper discovered.

It must not be assumed that there is any intention here to hold the creators of the standard comic book and comic strip characters in any degree responsible for the vile productions of those who publish and distribute the pornographic material herein described. But the unpleasant fact must be faced that in catering to the sensation-craving tastes of youthful readers as they do in all too many instances in their books and strips, they contribute measurably toward conditioning a market for the filth-peddlers.

II: What Do the Publishers of Comic Books Say in Defense of Their Product?

The defensive campaign is conducted on two principal lines. The first of these is based upon a slogan of the comic book publishers, i.e., "Good triumphs over evil in the comics." The second line consists of variations on the theme that the comic book is here to stay, whether parents like it or not; that it isn't really so bad, especially when compared with the penny-dreadfuls of an earlier age; that even if it does present certain undesirable aspects, it is nevertheless a force which must be reckoned with and endured because children insist upon its continuation.

This line of argument leads inevitably to some amazing conclusions. For example: in a survey entitled "Looking at the Comics," prepared by the Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association, parents are warned not to prohibit reading of the comic books by their children, as such interdiction "may only shake their confidence in our ability to 'understand'." Furthermore, this group cautions, "Prohibitions are likely to invite undercover reading, black market trading, and other evils." And then, in a perhaps unintentionally revealing afterthought, the dictum follows: "All taste is a process of development of the crude to the more subtle forms."

Here, surely, is great nonsense. Dangerous nonsense. Here, moreover, are half truths which demand close scrutiny and appraisal. Consider, for instance, the slogan, "Good triumphs over evil in the comics," already discussed in the first section of this report. The evils over which final victory is gained are first depicted in the most graphic detail, with the result that youthful readers become familiar with criminal techniques in

every imaginable department of crime. In the 92 comic books which form the basis of the present study, I found 14 distinct techniques of murder, each shown in sufficient detail to leave nothing to the imagination. True, the murderer or murderers were in each instance brought to justice (more often than not by unlawful means!) but without erasing from the minds the details of the crimes perpetrated.

Do children remember the ultimate triumph of good and forget the details of the evil? Here is a revealing light on this question, reported by a prominent state official who is the father of two small children less than ten years of age.

This gentleman, hearing excited outcries from a group of children playing in his yard, went out to inquire into the cause. He found them dancing and shouting about one of their young playmates who had been fastened to a tree: he was the "bad man" in a scene they were re-enacting from one of the good-triumphs-over-evil comics. Lacking rope with which to bind the juvenile villain of their game, they had procured a wire clothesline; when the official cited went over to unfasten the now terrified child, he found that his arms were already swelling from the tightly wound wire which confined him. Only this father's curiosity prevented serious consequences. On another occasion, reported in the newspapers, a small boy met death by hanging while trying to imitate the flying feats of a comic book hero.

Do children relish the depiction of evil before the eventual triumph of good? Not so generally as propagandists for the comic books would have us believe. The state official mentioned above "eavesdropped" on his young daughter and a few of her playmates as they looked through a stack of comic books, and was struck by their rejection of certain of these because "they show people all bloody," and was impressed by the comment of one little girl who remarked that "I can't sleep so good after I read that kind."

Is it true, as the propagandists allege, that "children enjoy silly language" and that they find a certain pleasure in "words that are not 'refined'?" Is it true that even members of the youngest age group (under 12) demand blood-and-thunder and tales of horror?

Here is an answer supplied by children of this group, as gleaned from their written statements, prepared without knowledge of the use to which these statements were to be put. Cooperating with this survey, Sister Jane Frances of the Marquette (Michigan) parochial schools gave to a group of her pupils as an assignment in composition the problem of explaining in their own words what they liked—and what they did not like—in comic books. On one point, these children were unanimous: without exception they mentioned by name one or more of the animal characters of the comic books and strips—Donald Duck, Porky Pig, Bambi, and others. Elsewhere there was less unanimity of opinion. For example 66 per cent specifically opposed "killing people," "too much shooting," "bad things that get you into trouble," etc. Nearly half (48 per cent) referred to the presence in the comics of unrealistic characters and actions: "I don't believe some of it," "they don't have true pictures," "people couldn't do those things," were observations noted among the comments.

Even after allowing for the probable desire of children to include comments likely to earn the approval of their teacher, the percentage of replies in which the words "right" and "good" and "bad" and "wrong" appeared is too great to be regarded as other than significant.

Similar responses from non-parochial schools, would afford a basis for comparison between the reactions of children who do not receive systematic religious instruction and those who do.

The conclusion drawn from this, in the light of the comic book propagandists' assertion that children prefer violent action, "silly language," and the like, is that these are preferred chiefly by those children who do not receive instruction and guidance designed to eliminate such preferences if they do indeed exist as claimed.

These claims of the comic book propagandists find little or no support in the written works of such eminent psychologists and specialists in child psychology as Dr. Carl R. Rogers (*Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child*), Dr. John Rathbone Oliver (*Psychiatry and Mental Health*), the Rev. Ioanne B. Ferreres, S. J., the Rt. Rev. Louis J. Nau, Drs. Karl Menninger, Starch, Klapper, and others of equal standing.

The persistence with which these assertions are made in written and oral defense of comics suggests that they may have been devised to bewilder and even mislead parents distressed by what they sense to be the menace inherent in many of the publications under consideration. Since the parroting of "silly language" and the imitating of swashbuckling, reckless action almost invariably follows the youthful perusal of the comics, the propagandists seek to allay parental concern over these manifestations by the assurance that they are "natural," that they are in effect a standard behavior pattern for children, and that the comics, therefore, represent no new potential threat responsible for them.

Further to minimize adult concern, the comics are casually dismissed as the "Fred Fearnots and the Frank Merriwells of today." In other words, the same negative argument is employed: earlier generations had bad reading habits, is the implication, so do not be alarmed because the present generation also has; the modern super-hero is no worse than Frank Merriwell. So runs the appeal. It is a half truth.

The whole truth is that only a minority of any of the earlier generations cited became addicted to the Frank Merriwells and other unrealistic characters of the paper-back school of "dime novels." Moreover, comparison of the Merriwell books with the average modern comic leads nowhere. The implausible Merriwell fought his battles on the baseball diamond, the football gridiron, and in other such arenas. He did not engage in mass murder, in vigilante crusades against lawbreakers whose crimes were first described in informative detail. He did not inculcate in his readers a habit of vulgar speech; indeed, the heroic Merriwell was a purist in speech. The choice of this character and the stacks of books recording his saga was an unfortunate one for the comic book propagandists.

As for the argument that children must not be forbidden to purchase or read the comics lest we "shake their confidence in our ability to 'understand'," or for fear of inviting "undercover reading, black market trading, and other evils," little can be found to recommend this line of reasoning.

If it were true, then parental bans on tobacco, narcotics, alcohol, and fornication might with equal wisdom and propriety be omitted. But it is not true. Most children between the ages of eight and fourteen—the group which the comic book publisher must enlist if his enterprise is to prosper—are not merely willing but eager to be guided by their parents' wisdom, so long as this wisdom is imparted to them in an understanding and understandable way. A more careful, objective study by the "child psychologists" so often referred to by the comic book propagandists would have revealed the truism that young children tend to look upon their mothers and fathers as the very fountainheads of wisdom; that they are anxious to gain parental approval; that most juvenile misbehavior results from improper handling by parents rather than from an innate urge to misbehave or disobey in the child.

That the comics constitute an actual menace rather than a force which is here to stay and which therefore must be tolerated by parents, is suggested by such an authority as Judge J. M. Braude, of the Chicago Boys' Court, a wise, experienced, understanding jurist who had handled thousands of youthful offenders. Judge Braude

does not share the easy complacency of the apologists for the comic book publishers. He says:

"As long as parents continue to let their youngsters read them just so long will comic books and newspaper strips continue to instill into children a distorted and depraved conception of the meaning of real life and living."

"Distorted," "depraved"—severe words, these, but they represent the deliberate judgment of one who has for years dealt with the youthful victims of parental unwillingness to control the child's actions. Listing as "the motivating forces behind most juvenile and adolescent crimes" such factors as "improper literature, shady movies, 'he-man' radio thrillers, and the comics," Judge Braude blames these in turn upon "nagging or uninterested parents," and asserts that they all flourish in one soil—"inadequate homes," and by this he does not limit himself to homes which are economically inadequate. Many parents have no idea of the dangerous influence of comic books. Perhaps the word comic has led them to believe that the subject matter of comic books is humorous and laugh provoking. Yet this is far from the truth for the word comic is a misnomer when applied to the adventures of mythical characters.

It is hard to believe that a parent who hands a child a comic book would ever for a moment dream of permitting that child to associate with the character types portrayed in comic continuities.

Without exception parents spend a great deal of time and go to much trouble to protect their children from the harsh unpleasant realities of life.

Yet the parent who hands a child an uncensored comic book is literally saying to that child: Meet these murderers, sadists and degenerates; observe and study how these inhuman monsters torture and kill their helpless victims; notice how inadequate the law enforcing authorities are in handling these criminals, and how necessary it is to set up illegal methods to bring about law and order.

Sister Mary Clare, S. N. D.,* (*Comics. Our Sunday Visitor Press, Huntington, Ind., 10¢.) has a reply ready for the propagandists who would like to induce parents to regard the comic book as a force which is here to stay. She says: ""Decent living, God loving parents will not sit back complacently and let money-mad pagans carry moral disease germs into the souls of their children. Such parents will redouble their efforts to train their children in self-mastery and self-sacrifice, knowing that only through self-discipline can there be true freedom."

Do the comic books, in fact, carry "moral disease germs into the souls of children?" Here are the findings.

III: Analysis of Contents of Comic Books

The comic books employed in this study were selected indiscriminately from the total number available to children and others at newsstands and "drugstores." Altogether, a total of 92 were studied; in several instances these included one or two successive issues of the same book. In addition to these, more than 1,000 newspaper comic strips were analyzed. The latter represents 27 different strips appearing during the months of August, September, and October, 1943.

The following are the principal objectionable features noted in the material studied. It will be understood that if, for example, four major crimes are depicted in four separate panels of the same issue, these have been counted as four.

MAJOR CRIMES DEPICTED—216

By this it meant 216 separate major felonies, depicted in greater or lesser detail, but in every instance included, in detail sufficient to afford at least a working knowledge of the technique employed by the criminal or criminals.

MINOR CRIMES DEPICTED—309

In this group are included actions depicted in which the offenses were less than felonious, i.e., misdemeanors as defined by the criminal codes of most states.

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR—271

Antisocial behavior, actions not in themselves violations of either felony or misdemeanor statutes. Mere mischievous acts or annoying conduct are not included.

PHYSICAL ASSAULTS—522

These include scenes in which acts of physical violence are performed upon human beings, with no obvious sadistic connotations but tending to glorify brute force, nearly all depicted with complete detail and an abundance of gore as the aftermath.

LARCENIES—39

These represent individual panels or series of panels in which are shown the exact method employed in carrying out various forms of larceny, ranging from shoplifting and pocket-picking to complicated confidence game swindles.

SADISTIC ACTS—86

Included here are clearly defined acts of sadism, of a type clearly recognizable as such. Included are several (11) instances of whipping, revealed in its true light in Courtney Ryley Cooper's shocking expose, Designs in Scarlet, as a vice far more prevalent in modern America than is suspected by most Americans. A typical sadistic performance included in this category: A young girl is shown being beaten by a degenerate who is clubbing her about the head with the butt of a revolver; one panel shows the girl in close-up, prostrate on the floor, one ear torn loose, her mouth an unrecognizable pulpy mass, blood pouring from her wounds. (After eight pages, Good Triumphs over Evil; a self appointed crusader shoots the degenerate; following this extra-legal retribution the police are notified.)

VULGAR BEHAVIOR—186

The greatest single source of examples for this classification was a particular strip in which, for the three-month period studied, not a single day failed to contain one or more examples of gross vulgarity.

SUGGESTIVE ART—114

This ranges from the moderately suggestive to the patently pornographic, and examples were especially noteworthy on the luridly colored covers of certain comic books. The suggestiveness commonly takes the form of scantily clad females, frequently shown in wantonly seductive postures. The female form is drawn so as to emphasize, often almost grotesquely, the breasts, hips, and legs of the subjects. Several of the newspaper strips offend in this particular.

VULGAR SPEECH—491

This fault is widespread. Included as "vulgar" are examples of words and phrases of underworld origin and use, and manufactured words intended to suggest commonly employed profanity and blasphemy, such as "Judas Priest," "gol dang," "jeez," and the like.

GROSS GRAMMATICAL ABUSES—194

This classification is self-explanatory, examples included being of the nature of "I seen," "I done," "He hain't," etc.

ONOMATOPOEIA—362

These manufactured words include the usual specimens, "glunk," "zock," "pow," and the rest.

PHYSICAL MONSTROSITIES—161

These present the total number of drawings of actual physical monstrosities, ranging from the merely grotesque to the revolting.

FANTASTIC SITUATIONS & ACTIONS—204
Included and scenes clearly divorced from any reasonable resemblance to reality—men walking up and down the sides of skyscrapers, holding a battleship up from the water, growing twenty pairs of arms and hands and a dozen heads, etc.

UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES—246
Those listed include the activities of self-appointed crusaders for righteousness, working without knowledge of or association with the regularly constituted agencies of law enforcement, presenting a picture wholly un-American in principle and practice. These are the facts as gleaned from the specimens included in this study. They supply the evidence upon which *The Case Against the Comics* is based.

IV: Who Sponsors This Literary Diet for American Youth?

Aside from the actual publishers of comic books, a new sponsorship for these publications has been obtained by certain publishers who have established "advisory boards," consisting of men and women of high national repute.

Such names as those of Mrs. Eleanor B. Roosevelt, Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Commander Gene Tunney, Dr. Allan Roy Dafoe, and others of equal renown are to be found in the various comic books, listed as members of an advisory board or committee, the implication being that these persons have placed the mark of their approval upon the contents of the book.

A question of grave ethical import is raised by this practice. Aside from the fact that the name of Dr. Dafoe continued to appear after his death, there remain the living whose actual service in this connection may fairly be questioned. It appears to be beyond the limits of probability that such men as Rear Admiral Byrd and Commander Tunney, both officers in the armed forces of a nation engaged in war, cold have nay time to devote to a study of the material which is presented to the public with this suggested stamp of their approval and sponsorship.

Publishers who employ this device do not make any specific statement to the effect that these advisory board members do perform any actual duties. The implication to troubled parents, however, is clear. Opening a comic book, finding the names of prominent men and women listed as members of the publisher's advisory board, these parents are quite likely to conclude: "This book must be all right, or such people wouldn't approve."

Have they approved it? Have these editorial advisors, in fact, inspected the contents of the issues of comic books in which their names appear as a suggested pledge of good faith?

These are questions which may fairly be asked of the publishers employing this method of sales promotion. If the method is to be employed regularly for the purpose of allaying the doubts of parents, would it not be reasonable to suggest that these lists of apparent sponsors be accompanied be a definite statement as to the exact advisory duties performed by each member of the board?

The use of "big names" in sales promotions is an old American custom. We have all read testimonials to a cigarette by some prominent man—who never smokes. We have seen the glowing laudation of a cosmetic by a socialite matron who has never in her life used the brand she had "endorsed."

If the members of the advisory boards retained by comic-book publishers are actually performing a definite supervisory or advisory function, it should be so stated in clear English. If, on the other hand, names are used as mere window-dressing to lull parents into an unwarranted sense of security concerning their child's reading, the practice should be discontinued.

V: A Threat to the America of Tomorrow

The comic book plot pattern which appears with more frequency than any other deals with the adventures of a self-appointed crusader or liberator who undertakes, wholly on his own responsibility, to combat crime, evil, and international intrigue.

He will be, this Whattaman, an incredibly powerful, superhumanly intelligent individual whose achievements will surpass anything ever accomplished by any known law-enforcement agency. Alone and unaided he will discover the identity of criminals, will pursue and capture them, will determine their innocence or guilt, pronounce judgment upon them and, in many instances, execute the sentence, often death.

What of today's children whose minds are being conditioned by a regular diet of this type of adventure? Is it a training calculated to imbue these future citizens with respect for the slower methods of constitutional and statutory procedure? Are Whattaman addicts likely to have patience with the doddering oldsters who cling to the American conceptions of law and order and human liberties?

Even juvenile characters in the comic books engage in un-American activities of this nature. Fictitious "junior commando" groups bear a strong resemblance to the bands of child militarists in Nazi Germany. Impatience with regular forces of government and law is the keynote in all of these features. One such little heroine couldn't wait for the Army and the Navy and the F.B.I. She and her "commandos" ferreted out the espionage gang; they discovered the hidden submarine nest; they imprisoned scores of Nazi spies sailors, and soldiers; before the end they destroyed a fleet of submarines, snuffed out the lives of many enemy invaders—while carrying on, as an ennui-relieving sideline, a municipal election campaign against political forces of evil.

The appalling by-product is that it is teaching impressionable youngsters to hate, to hate savagely, and to applaud and emulate those who would demonstrate that two wrongs make one right. Children all too soon mature, and if, upon reaching maturity, they are solicited to follow some leader who promises fast action against individuals and forces which he, the leader, declares to be evil, what reason, what hope is there to assume that they will not gladly enlist under his banner?

It is not enough that good should triumph over evil. The triumph must be gained by lawful, American methods. In the study of the comic books upon which this report is based, there were discovered 246 un-American plots or episodes of a vigilante nature, a total which indicates the extent to which the masked-and-hooded-justice falsity appeals to those who produce the features in which these were found.

VI: Conclusion

The overall picture, no matter how persuasively the comic book apologists may seek to minimize the objectionable features of their product, is a disheartening one. The actual figures, based upon a thorough study of a representative collection of the books and strips, reveal the evil phases of this contemporary American menace to childhood.

The books paint an unreal and unwholesome world and fail miserably to prepare youthful readers for good living. Success, in the comics, is gained rapidly, in the grand manner, and often by questionable means. Long years of preparation for success, years of toil and application and frugality, the frustrations and obstacles of real life all are lightly passed over or ignored. The world of the comics is an unreal world.

It is, moreover, an almost totally irreligious world. Moral and Christian values are rarely to be

found identified as such in the comics. Night clubs, gang hideouts, worldly scenes are to be seen with wearying frequency, but the church is practically never seen or referred to. The world of the comics is an irreligious world. It is, in the main, a Godless world.

The editor of the *New York Sun* has said: "The paganism of our times flows out of a general denial of all obligations save those of self-advantage." This is the outstanding theme of the overwhelming majority of comics: A general denial of all obligations save those of self-advantage.

The cure for this cancerous growth must be administered by three agencies: Church, school and home. The urgings of those whose self-interest is involved may be disregarded. The services of law-enforcement agencies may be utilized only when the products of Church, school, and parental failure have been led into court.

In count upon count in the indictment, we find evidences of the danger to American children inherent in the comic books. They threaten the welfare of our boys and girls. This is the case against the comics.

Timely Quotes

MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF University Women in Gary, Indiana, working with the schools, made a survey to find how widespread was the influence of the comics among school children. During the week of survey a committee questioned 696 grade school pupils with the following findings: these children had read 915 books, of which 137 could be termed "good." But, they had read a total of 2,370 comic magazines, or about 3.4 comic books per pupil. Thirty-five per cent had read nothing but comics!

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Nov. 4, 1942. Comics Are No Longer Comic. By Margaret Frakes.

TWO FACTORS HAVE COMBINES TO SKYROCKET comics in the realm of big business: (1) the well-filled pockets of the nation's school children; and (2) the war-developed soldier market. But children remain the best customers. A recent readership survey revealed that regular readers comprise 95% of the 8 to 11 age group; 84% of the 12 to 17 age group, and 35% of the 18 to 30 age group. After 30, comic-book publishers sadly confess, the urge for their product slackens off. Six thousand schools now use the comics as supplementary texts.

NEWSWEEK, Dec. 27, 1943
—Escapist Paydirt.

SEVENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF LEISURE-TIME reading of children in the 9-14 age group is spent on 125 different comic magazines, of which there are sold 180,000,000 a year. These facts were presented to three hundred thirty persons attending a children's Book Week luncheon in November, 1941, at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City. The facts were compiled by George J. Hecht, President and Publisher of *Parents Magazine*, who termed this form of reading a threat to character development and called on publishers of children's books to counteract the comics' effects.

RECREATION, February, 1942.

DURING A HEARING ON PAROLE PETITIONS, Criminal Judge Charles W. Lusk of Chattanooga, Tenn., blamed the comic strips as one of the primary causes of crime. "I am fully convinced," he said, "that some of these strips based on disreputable, well-nigh criminal acts, are responsible for creating ideas in the minds of children,"... The unfortunate influence of the comics on the youth of the country has either been ignored or deprecated in deference to their money-earning potentialities.... Ultimately, the fate of both comic strips and comic magazines, must rest upon the action of the nation's parents.

THE CATHOLIC WORLD, February, 1943. What's Wrong with the Comics? By Thomas F. Doyle

THE "COMICS" ARE A MANY-SIDED TRAGEDY. The chief ill effects are mental and emotional; sometimes the harm is physical also. Instead of filling the children's minds with a balanced understanding of life-as-it-is and life-as-it-could and-should-be, the "comics" gear the kids to an impossible unrealistic, fantastic life. But the bad effect on the moral and religious life of the youngsters is something far worse. The "comic" books specialize these days in filling innocent minds and hearts with hate. Considering that the children in the lower grammar school grades are with their "comics" much more than with books proper for youngsters—and this goes for Catholic children as well as non-Catholic—what chance do our Lord and His Gospel stand of becoming the dominant Person and the governing force in the lives of our boys and girls?

OUR SUNDAY VISITOR, June 20, 1943. By Rev. Frank E. Gartland, C.S.C.

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Robert Kahn

Continued from page 33

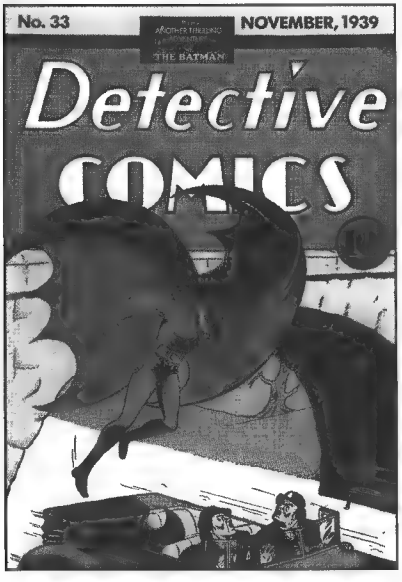
remembered Zorro, as Bill did. Actually, fifty years later it's hard for me to say truthfully whether he came up with it, or I. But I remember discussing it, and we agreed that he should have the dual identity of Zorro. He also saw *The Mark of Zorro*. He was about a year younger than I.

MURRAY: *It's interesting. Siegel and Shuster credited The Scarlet Pimpernel as the inspiration for the Clark Kent/Superman duality. They were very similar characters. I think The Scarlet Pimpernel inspired Zorro.*

KANE: At the time of my creation, I wasn't aware of the Scarlet Pimpernel. But they are interrelated.

MURRAY: *Did you know Siegel and Shuster well?*

KANE: I met them at DC Comics in '38. Joe was kind of introverted. Jerry was introverted, also. (*Laughs*) They were Cleveland fellows and very nice, very quiet, low-key and very talented. I got Joe some dates at that time. He didn't know any girls in New York. And I was always a rogue. The girls used to kid and say, "Who do you think we're going out with tonight? Batman and Superman!"



Detective #33 featured the famous Bat-origin where young Bruce Wayne witnesses his parents gunned down by a crook and then devotes his life to fighting crime.

MURRAY: *Schiff once told me that you were going to take Batman from DC in the '40s, around the time of the Superman lawsuit. He said he talked you out of it. Is that true?*

KANE: That's not the story. DC had the Batman. I couldn't take it away. But I had other offers to create another Batman-like character for another publisher. And I didn't know whether to stay with the Batman, or go and own the rights to the new character. I never owned the rights to the Batman, unfortunately.

MURRAY: *But you did have a participation.*

KANE: I always had, and still have, a participation. So I compromised, and Siegel and Shuster did not. That was their big mistake. I told them never to sue DC Comics. Compromise. That was my advice to them. But they didn't listen. They would have fared pretty well had they listened to me. DC was fair, but you can't take it away when they own it.

MURRAY: *So what was the real story?*

KANE: Joe Shuster called me one weekend after the war and said, "Are you joining us?" I said, "Where are you going? To a party? I'd love to join you." He said, "We're suing DC for the rights back." So I said, "Oh my God. That's a big mistake, Joe. Why don't you go down and talk to them?" They were making about $800 a week, apiece. Both of them. In those days that was damn good money. So, Jerry Siegel wanted to sue. Joe would not sue. He was more of an introvert—a quiet little inhibited fellow. Jerry was more aggressive. And look what happened."

MURRAY: *It's too bad.*

KANE: Life is a compromise. You can't have all the candy in the jar. And I learned that early. And I was always doing well. And if you're doing well and you want the whole cookie jar, it's greed. Making $800 a week—which I was—was a lot of money. Like making a thousand a week today. I didn't want to give that up—take a chance on losing it all.

MURRAY: *You played your cards right.*

KANE: I think so, in retrospect I wish I owned it. You'll always have that nagging, gnawing thing about the perfection in life. But I compromised and I'm happy in other areas. You gotta have love. You gotta have health. You gotta have friends. There's more to life than money, and greed. I'm metaphysical, as you can tell from some of the things I say, and spiritual. And there's more to life than making money.

MURRAY: *Is Bob Kane your real name, or your professional name?*

KANE: It's my professional name. My real name is Kahn—K-a-h-n— which is very close to it. Robert Kahn. As a kid they called me Robby. I had it changed when I was a kid, and I suppose at one point it might have been anti-Semitism. When I first wanted to work for an advertising agency, they would say Mr. Cohen on the phone, and somehow I couldn't get a job. And when I changed it to Kane, I had more offers. But I was never ashamed of being Jewish. I legally changed it many years ago, so if today I used Kahn, they'd put me in jail. (*Laughs*) There was an actor Kane Richmond in those days. I thought it was very clean-cut. So I got the name from Kane.

MURRAY: *There were a lot of Batman imitators during the Golden Age of comics. How did you react to them?*

KANE: They say "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." We used to watch all the imitators after Batman and Superman. They'd all come out with a

boy wonder. And we'd sue. We didn't bother suing anybody unless there was a blatant steal.

MURRAY: *Catman was about as blatant as you can get. Did DC have anything to do with killing that character?*

KANE: I think DC had it for a while. Only they had it later. I think Catman came back to their stable. At first, it was another publisher.

MURRAY: *I think that Catman became a Batman villain in the '60s.*

KANE: Someone had the Black Cat, who was imitative of Catwoman. Some were blatant steals. We would sue if it were blatant, otherwise we'd let it go by the boards.

MURRAY: *What do you remember about the big controversy in 1939, when a pulp hero called the Black Bat debuted just months after Batman, in* Black Book Detective*?*

KANE: I never saw it. Whit Ellsworth took care of that. I never knew much of the machinations of it. All I know is the pulp seems to have desisted a few months later, so apparently they were stopped by DC Comics somehow.

MURRAY: *Actually, they kept going for another ten years.*

KANE: I didn't know that. He looked like a bat, didn't he?

MURRAY: *He looked a lot like Batman, but the funny thing is that when the writer created him, he was called the Tiger. It was the publisher who insisted the character be renamed the Black Bat.*

KANE: That's interesting. Ellsworth did bring it up at one meeting. He said. "There is a character called the Black Bat. There may be a little litigation on either side." I was a little nervous about it for a while. I never saw the Black Bat until they showed it to me after the fact.

MURRAY: *How well did you know DC publisher Harry Donenfeld?*

KANE: Very well. (*Laughs*) He was like a mogul. He was very flamboyant. He used to go down to Florida. I'd go down

Batman plunges on his Bat-rope through the Gotham City night.

Of Catcaves, Catmobiles, & Kane's Kartoons

by David Krell

Batman's creator is gone… but what seems to get lost in the obituaries and the tributes, are the lesser known entries on the artist's resumé, whether it be actor, director, writer or comic book artist. Two of these lesser known entries are Bob Kane's contribution to the animation arena. The more recognizable of the two is a parody of his own creation. *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse* was offered in syndication in September, 1960. Simply, first-run syndication means the show is sold to individual stations or a station group which owns more than one station) rather than a network.

Kane made no pretenses about borrowing from his own Batman creation for the feline takeoff. Gotham City became Empire City. The base of operations was the Catcave. And while Batman had his utility belt, Courageous had something akin to fellow feline Felix the Cat's tail and its power of metamorphosis. Hal Erickson explains in *Television Cartoon Shows: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, 1949 through 1993 (McFarland, 1995).

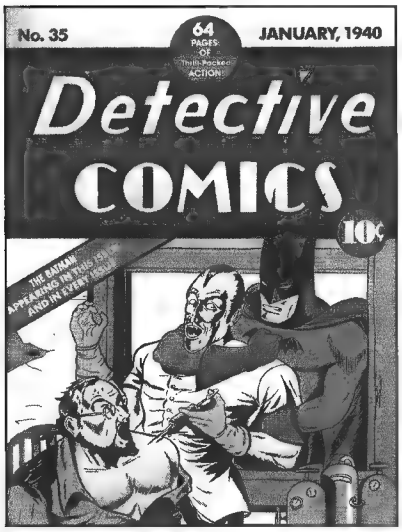
"Courageous Cat had a gimmick. You couldn't miss it. It was pulled out and played beyond its worth at every opportunity. The gimmick was Courageous Cat's Catgun, which with a flick of the trigger could be converted into a parachute, an umbrella, a bulletproof shield, a ladder, a can opener—and on rare occasions, a gun." Kane also borrowed devices used in the crime films of the 1930s and 1940s in *Courageous Cat.* Radio bulletins and newspaper headlines often advanced the stories, informing the cat-and-mouse crimefighting duo of the police department's need for assistance.

Also, while the Joker was the key villain in the Batman stories, Courageous and Minute also had villains. Flat-Face Frog (who's real name was Chauncey) and his able lieutenant, Harry the Gorilla, were fan favorites, probably because Frog bore a striking and deliberate resemblance to an actor who became famous in the cinema's crime genre a quarter of a century prior. Kane paid homage (or parodied, depending on how you look at it) to tough guy Edward G. Robinson by using a Robinson characterization as Frog's voice-person- *(Cont. on page 55)*

COURAGEOUS CAT, MINUTE MOUSE, COOL MCOOL © BOB KANE

Robert Kahn

there in the early days and he'd hand me a thousand dollars and say, "Here, kid, go play play the horses." Just out of his pocket. He was very gregarious and a charming little man. A great personality. I liked him. And Jack Liebowitz. I found with them that they were fair. You'd couldn't steal the thing and get it back. But somehow when you went down for raises, they'd be amenable. I'd be discontented every few months and they would walk in and smoke, you know, and hand me a few more bucks.



Batman stops the mad doctor's hypodermic revenge on the cover of Tec #35.

MURRAY: *Many actors have played Batman over the years. Who best exemplifies your Batman?*

KANE: I've always thought of a young Robert Wagner as Bruce Wayne. He has the chiseled features. In fact when I first heard they were going to film Batman in '87 or '88, I thought immediately of Robert Wagner. He has a husky build. They wouldn't have had to go with a big uniform to fill him out. When I mentioned Wagner, they said he was a television actor—whatever *that* means. In Hollywood, they characterize you with what you've done lately. He may have been a shade too old for the role.

MURRAY: *What is your favorite film incarnation of Batman?*

KANE: The first movie serial in 1943. I thought it was Cecil B. DeMille! It was so crude, but just to see it on film was more exciting to me than the '89 film. Today, you look at them and they're very campy. But they were done on a very low budget. They had a lot of action. The first actor was Lewis Wilson. He was kind of overweight, and he looked like he needed a bra. Robin was about 32. He should have been 17, with curly hair. And the Batmobile was a gray convertible. I said to the director, "At least why don't you get a black limousine?" They were quickies. They weren't bad for the era. The second was a little bit better than the first one. Robert Lowery was pretty good. I thought he was better than the first actor. Robin was younger. He was 25, instead of 35. (*Laughs*) Actually when I first saw them I was quite thrilled. But don't forget I was a kid then, and I was impressed to see my name on the screen.

The Caped Crusader pays a visit by the light of the moon.

I met Robert Lowery at a party when I came out here in '49. I said, "Hi, I'm Bob Kane." And I held out my hand. And he looked at me. He'd had a few drinks, and he said, "You're the son of a bitch who killed my career." Meaning, that to play the famous superhero at times does sometimes end a career that might have gone elsewhere, because you're so tied to the character.

MURRAY: *Was that your first inkling that Batman wasn't just a flash in the pan?*

KANE: Yeah. I thought as the years went on, it would capture every decade. I knew it was here to stay.

MURRAY: *I understand you drew from your Hollywood days in creating Vicki Vale.*

KANE: I got her originally from Marilyn Monroe, whom I met in Hollywood. In 1948, I came out for the 1949 Batman serial. We went down to Santa Monica beach, and I drew some sketches of her. I took them back to New York. I said, "Hey, here's the character of Vicki Vale." It's in her image, actually.

MURRAY: *Do you look back on the Batman TV show with fondness, or embarrassment?*

KANE: It's a classic and will stand forever on what it is. It's camp… comedy for older folks, and the kids took it seriously when it came out. It's on two levels. And the villains! My God, you'll never in your life again see an array of villains in with the name stars in cameos. I loved it right off. It was a comic book come to life. Batman's still a classic. It'll go on forever.

MURRAY: *Tell me about your cartoon show,* Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse.

KANE: Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse were a miniature Batman and Robin. I readapted Batman and Robin. That goes back to 1957. I was in Hollywood and I was always interested in animation. I met this animated studio guy—I think his name was Singer, and we were out one night and he said, "We're looking for some new stuff. Do you have anything in mind?" I said, "Why don't we do a cat and a mouse in the kind of stylized cartoony image of Batman and Robin? We'll have a Catmobile. And the villain will be like the Penguin, and speak like Edward G. Robinson." It was very simple: I used the same format as Batman and Robin.

MURRAY: *Why didn't you just do Batman and Robin as a cartoon?*

KANE: They already had animated commitments at that time.

MURRAY: *You created other TV shows as well.*

KANE: In the mid-'60s when Batman was so big, and I was out here, I started to sell some things to TV. Doug Kramer was my champion. And you know where he went: Spelling-Kramer. And I would have been with him, and I would have probably had half a dozen shows on the air and my own building out here. Instead I ran back to New York. It wasn't really the place for my talent. I sold a couple of things to TV of course.

ality. Other Courageous Cat villains included Prof. Shaggy Dog, the Black Cat, Rodney the Rodent, and Prof. Noodle Stroodle.

Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse finished with 100 five-minute cartoons. But the Kane fan and Bat aficionado will note the context of the cartoon, particularly the year—1960. This was six years before the live-action camp TV show *Batman* carved out a niche for superheroes in the mid-1960s (e.g., *The Green Hornet, Captain Nice, Super President*). Such an attempt at a Batman takeoff could have lasted longer had it had been timed to coincide with the success of the Caped Crusader's live-action show.

Instead, with Courageous predating the TV show, Kane's animated Bat-parody actually set the stage for the campiness of Adam West, Burt Ward, et. al. If something is camp, it's not taken so seriously. And Kane well understood and appreciated the value of camp in his creations. In fact, while most readers probably look to Batman's dark roots begun by Kane and collaborator Bill Finger in the late 1930s (and revitalized in 1986 by Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns*), Kane looked to camp as another vital facet of the Batman character… and developed it completely in *Courageous Cat*. *The New York Times* obituary of Kane in the November 7, 1998 edition highlights Kane's thoughts on the matter.

"Batman and Robin were always punning and wisecracking and so were the villains," he said in an interview in 1965. "It was camp way ahead of its time." Kane's fondness of camp and animation continued in the 1960s with a second cartoon show. This time though, Kane undoubtedly capitalized on the success of TV's *Batman* which premiered in January, 1966. But rather than go with another superhero creation, Kane looked to a another genre that was blazing hot in the 1960s—spy guys!

When President Kennedy declared Ian Fleming to be a favorite author, the '60's spy craze was born. James Bond skyrocketed to pop culture icon status and established the standard against which spy genre characters would be measured.

And animators drew on the attraction, literally. While the big screen had James Bond, and live-action television had Maxwell Smart, cartoons gave us the inimitable, alliterative Cool McCool with a show by the same name.

Cool McCool was a well-intentioned, somewhat bumbling agent who answered to Number One, his superior. Some points of interest include the opening of Cool McCool which directly referenced James Bond by spelling out the title character's name: "C double-oh L." Like other heroes, Cool McCool had a favorite phrase: "Danger is my business!"

Each Cool McCool show consisted of two stories starring the agent with a third story featuring Cool's father, Harry. Harry McCool was a member of a cop trio, the other two being (of course) Tom and Dick. Reminiscent of the Keystone Kops, the police troika of Tom, Dick and Harry bumbled and stumbled through each adventure, eventually solving the case. Harry was introduced frequently by Cool strumming a guitar and singing wistful lyrics ending with a verse like "My pop, the cop."

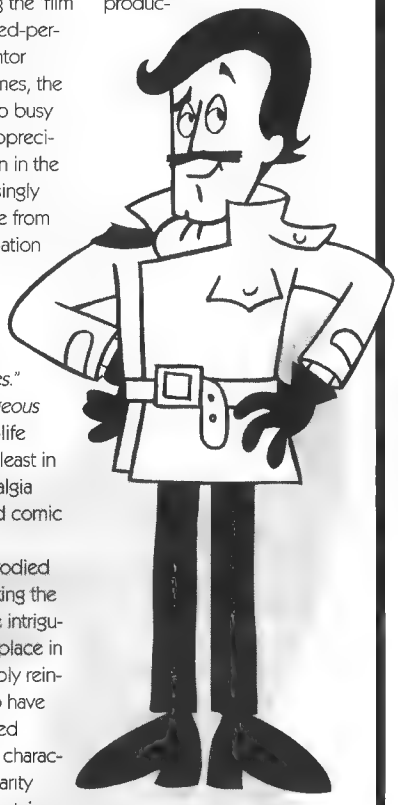
Erickson notes the artistry of Kane and his influence on the animation.

"The series was occasionally effective in invoking the 'film noire' milieu and forced-perspective art of its mentor Bob Kane. At other times, the backgrounds were too busy for the audience to appreciate what was going on in the foreground—a surprisingly clumsy graphic choice from the series' British animation staff at TVC Studios, who'd done such excellent work on [Executive Producer Al] Brodax' *The Beatles*."

Obviously, *Courageous Cat* has a longer shelf-life than *Cool McCool*, at least in the memories of nostalgia buffs, Batmaniacs, and comic book historians. In *Courageous*, Kane parodied his own creation, making the show that much more intriguing. Its long-standing place in our memory is probably reinforced by others who have poked fun at the Caped Crusader, proving the character's long-lived popularity and appeal in the entertainment world. One of the several examples in this genre that baby boomers may recall is the animated offering… *Batfink* (circa 1967).

Also, Alvin & the Chipmunks spoofed the character in a classic story entitled "Batmunk." In that episode, Simon plays the caped hero and Alvin, the mischievous chipmunk, plays "The Jokester."

Even in the 1990s, Batparody's continue. *Brotherly Love* and *The Drew Carey Show* have also looked to the Dark Knight as a source of comedy. No mystery here, either. DC Comics' sister company Warner Brothers enjoys a connection to both shows, airing the former show on its WB network and producing the latter show through its television arm.



And given the growing popularity of Batman, Batman family characters, animation, and cartoon networks, the parodies will no doubt continue. But Bob Kane is gone now… and the cartoon world will have to settle for two brief, but historically significant offerings from the creator of one of the greatest characters in comic book history.

(Continued from page 27)

Her face contorts with pain as the bullet hits her… Tuska was very good at drawing people in pain, he'd had plenty of practice with Biro's stories. Though she wasn't meant to, the woman survives to identify the killers who, not sure whether they had killed her or not, went to hide out with Clay's cousin Margie and her husband.

Ultimately, Clay orders Margie to take off his shoes. "That's my first order," he says. Her husband cries "Don't do it Margie," and is rewarded by Clay's friend who hits him over the head with a blackjack. "Shut up you louse," yells the accomplice, "or I'll split your skull open!" The next frame shows him asking Margie: "Do I kick his teeth in or do you take Clay's shoes off?"

Later, Margie overhears Clay and his accomplice discussing robbing a public school the next day. "They get paid monthly and tomorrow's the first," says Jimmy. "I'm calling the police the second they leave this house," whispers Margie to Sam. Taking what little money Margie has in her purse, Clay goes to town to buy bullets, "You can't point an empty gun at a guy and expect his to drop dead, you know!"

Margie sees Clay go to get the car and instead of waiting a minute, rushes to phone the police. Unfortunately, Clay and Jimmy see her silhouette reaching for the phone through the window. They go inside and Clay tells Jimmy to heat up a poker. "I think we'll get serious," he tells Margie. Her husband tries to intervene but Jimmy knocks him cold and Clay twists Margie's arm behind her back. Margie is terrified. She screams "Don't touch me with that thing!" Clay laughs and is about to apply the poker to her neck when she passes out. The hoods go out and buy a hundred cartridges.

Clay and Jimmy go to the school. It is Sunday and there's only a janitor in attendance. Clay asks him where the money is but the janitor says he doesn't know. "I know how to fix a bad memory," grimaces Clay. "Stick your fingers on the table. The janitor does as he is told and Clay brings his gun butt down hard on the hapless janitor's fingers. The janitor screams in pain. "Get me now," snarls Clay. "You'd better or I'll break every bone in your seedy body!" Whereupon he smashes the man's hand once more. The janitor tells them the money is in the principal's office, "Oh, my fingers," he whimpers, "You've ruined my hand!" To which Clay replies as he hits him in the jaw with his gun butt: "Now ain't that sad!"

Finally the police arrest Clay who blubbers about hi obvious date with the chair "N…No!! Nyaaahh!! I don't want to die!! Sob! Ee!! Don't pull me! I don't want to go! Stop! Stop! Ee!!" So ended Clay Fogelman.

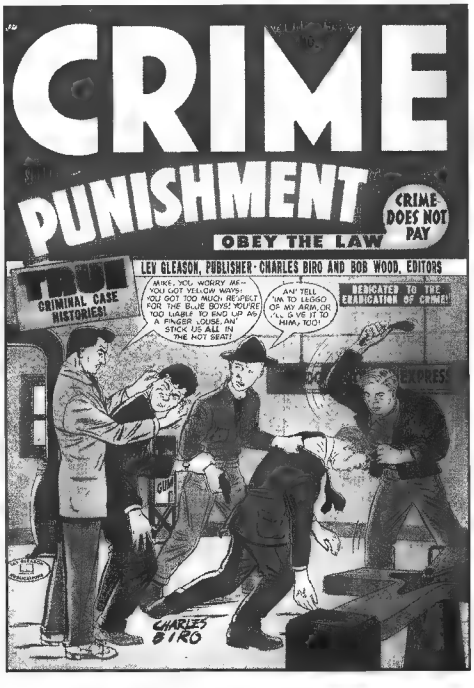
Mr. Crime ends by saying: "So you see? You never know—a tough guy can shoot off a big mouth and wield a big fist, like Clay Fogelman, and then wind up like a wriggling, squealing rat under the foot of the law. A lotta people don't know that there aren't any brave criminals! There are only two kinds—yellow ones and dumb ones! Won't the saps ever learn that CRIME DOES NOT PAY!"

This was not the worst story by any means. *Crime Does Not Pay* had many more that served up gratuitous brutality to women. In issue #54 a hoodlum forces a frightened young girl to drive him out of town into the country. On the way he realizes the girl could identify him for his crimes so he suggests they would be a good team, even get married some day. The girl replies with a question, asking what will happen if she doesn't agree to his ideas. The thug tells her to pull over, slaps her hard on the face and tells her to get out of the car. She screams that she is engaged and that she loves her boyfriend. She understands what he is going to do to her and cries out that yes, she'll marry him. "It's too late now, sister," he tells the sobbing girl. "You had your chance—you'd turn me in the first chance you got—and that's how it is—this is the end, pretty baby!" The girl is petrified. She begs him not to kill her. A close up panel shows the crook shooting her in the side of the head with the girl's face contorting in pain.

In issue #62, a close up shows a pretty blonde being shot in the neck. The excellent art in both cases was by George Tuska.

There is no doubt that Biro was a good writer, his tales were rich with characterization, plenty of action, and massive amounts of text.

But whether or not the youthful Biro and Wood worried about the effect their stories might have on children has never been documented.

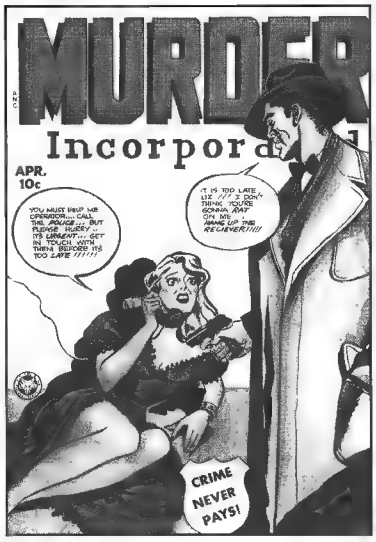

CRIME PUNISHMENT
CRIME DOES NOT PAY
OBEY THE LAW
LEV GLEASON, PUBLISHER · CHARLES BIRO AND BOB WOOD, EDITORS
TRUE CRIMINAL CASE HISTORIES!
DEDICATED TO THE ERADICATION OF CRIME!
MIKE, YOU WORRY ME— YOU GOT YELLOW WAYS— YOU GOT TOO MUCH RESPECT FOR THE BLUE BOYS! YOU'RE TOO LIABLE TO END UP AS A FINGER JOISE AN' STICK US ALL IN THE HOT SEAT!
AW TELL 'IM TO LEGGO OF MY ARM, OR I'LL GIVE IT TO HIM, TOO!
EXPRESS
GUN
CHARLES BIRO

Cover of Crime & Punishment #3 (Jun 1948, SOTI) showing "disrespect for policemen."

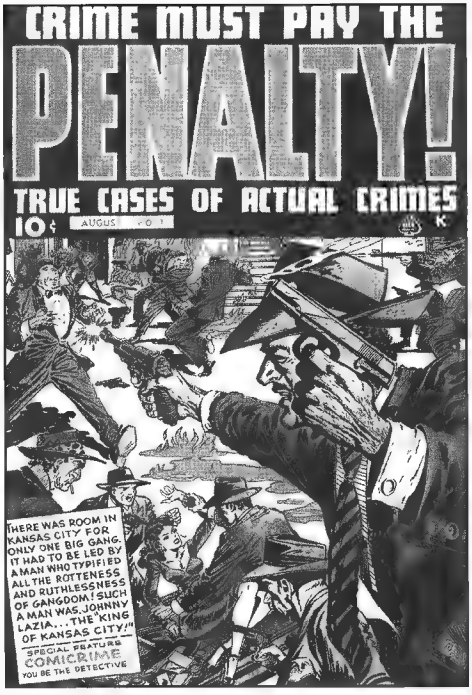
Fox Features Syndicate

If *Crime Does Not Pay* was infamous as the bloodiest and most realistic of the crime comics, some of the other publisher's gave the title a run for its money. Competing well the "most sexy, sadistic and violent" category, Victor Fox's *Murder Incorporated* and *Blue Beetle* are noteworthy, historic, and very collectible titles. As many *CBM* readers know, Fox Features comics were printed on poor quality paper which didn't do much for the reproduction (and makes surviving high grade copies very scarce and sought after in today's comic book marketplace). When historians describe sleaze, sex, and violence as Fox's obsession, they are the masters of understatement. His best artists, Jack Kamen and Matt Baker, are much revered and collected for their good girl art. (Of special note is the company's breasty crime-fighter-in-bedroom-lingerie, Phantom Lady… along with the wild and scantily attired Rulah, Jungle Goddess.)

In Victor Fox's early years, Blue Beetle was a superhero in the familiar mold. In the late '40s, Fox added liberal helpings of sex combined with violence so that the title would sell at newsstands flooded with crime books.


MURDER
Incorporated
APR.
10c
YOU MUST HELP ME OPERATOR!... CALL THE POLICE!... BUT PLEASE HURRY!... IT'S LONGEY!... GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!!!!!
IT IS TOO LATE LIZ!!! I DON'T THINK YOU'RE GONNA AWF ON ME HANG UP THIS RECEIVER!!!!!
CRIME NEVER PAYS!

Murder Incorporated #9 (Apr 1949, the second of two issues numbered 9) Guides for an amazingly low $51 in FN.


CRIME MUST PAY THE
PENALTY!
TRUE CASES OF ACTUAL CRIMES
10¢
THERE WAS ROOM IN KANSAS CITY FOR ONLY ONE BIG GANG. IT HAD TO BE LED BY A MAN WHO TYPIFIED ALL THE ROTTENESS AND RUTHLESSNESS OF GANGDOM! SUCH A MAN WAS JOHNNY LAZIA... THE "KING OF KANSAS CITY."
SPECIAL FEATURE
COMICRIME
YOU BE THE DETECTIVE

The infamous "Frisco Mary" story from Crime Must Pay The Penalty! #3 (Aug 1948) was used during the Senate Investigation hearings.

In *Blue Beetle* #56 (May 1948), is a classic example of sex and crime. The book begins "'Deliver me from crazy women,' So said Dan Garrett, alias Blue Beetle, many a time in jest. Then he tangled with a paranoiac female to end all females... and she was doing just that... ending all females... until the greatest crook killer of all solved the case of the 'Sinister Sphinx.'"

First, a panel shows a sexily attired blonde looking through a window where we see a bosomy girl in silhouette undressing. "Murder on stealthy feet stalks the Debutante of the Year"... says the opening caption. Next we see the girl at her mirror saying goodnight to the maid. Once the maid has gone, the blonde leaps through the window. "It's goodbye, Miss Marsh, not goodnight!" snaps the blonde. "Ooh! Help!"

Then the blonde with the naked midriff grabs the luckless debutante and stabs her in the throat. Blood oozes over her ample breasts and the blonde places a tiny sphinx on her chest. The killer is described as "paranoiac" because she leaves the sphinx models on the bodies.

Later, the blonde killer drives through the night in an expensive roadster on her way to kill a strip teaser. (Yes, even strip teasers got into Fox comics.) The Sphinx killer, replete in her Frederick's of Hollywood costume, eventually arrives at the strip club.

In her skimpy costume with 5" heels, she plunges her knife into the stripper's chest who cries out uselessly, "Help! No! Don't!" To which our maniac replies "Got to, sister! You'll make headlines... for the last time." There's plenty of headlight art here... even on the dead girl... pouring from her chest wound.

Another girl gets a knife in her throat, and eventually the Blue Beetle catches the Sphinx, beating her to a pulp in the final panels.

Paying The Penalty

Another interesting title was *Crime Must Pay the Penalty* from Ace. Top heavy with violence, issue #3 contains a bloody tale called "Johnny Lazia King of Kansas City." The final panel is full of gore. Lazia lies on his back, blood pouring from everywhere, and his girlfriend lies dead on top of him.

Then there's a vicious tale called "Frisco Mary." A fetching brunette newlywed in tight sweater and skirt is introduced by her husband to his crooked buddies. "So these were the hotshots you were telling me about? They ain't nothin' but two bit punks!" she sneers, cigarette in hand. One of the men replies: "What's that? I oughta slap them pretty teeth outta that loud mouth! Breeze, sister! Blow!" Mary naturally takes umbrage and smashes the guy with a left hook saying "Don't talk to me like that, you mangy little rat!"

Mary virtually takes over the gang and leads them on a series of robberies peppered with violence. Later there's a panel which has become quite notorious: it shows "Frisco" Mary machine gunning a cop who got in her way. The expression on the cop's face is full of agony as "Frisco" pumps him full of lead. "We could have got twice as much if wasn't for this frog-headed rate! I'll show him!"

After more killings and robberies, the police finally get the gang and "Frisco" Mary Fenner "... breathed out her life in a California gas chamber, discovering, but too late... that Crime Must Pay the Penalty."

Crime flourished at the turn of the decade. Anything depraved, sadistic and violent found a home in the lurid, cheaply printed pages of *Crime Smashers, Crime & Punishment, Justice Traps the Guilty* and *Real Clue Crime Stories*. (Actually, the latter pair were not quite as bad as they often had reasonable stories with far less emphasis on violence). Remember, also, that Prize Comics' *Justice Traps the Guilty* was a Joe Simon and Jack Kirby creation and was brim full of many beautifully illustrated stories. Simon and Kirby claimed they eschewed too much blood 'n' guts gore but Kirby wasn't shy of the occasional girl beating or slapping in some tales.

War Against Crime... Comics

Some comic publishers continued to produce even more controversial material. By 1950 the uproar against comic books in general had become an epidemic, not only in America but in other countries as well. Wertham tramped across the nation, giving speeches to those who would listen... and there were many... writing articles for popular magazines and being interviewed on radio. All seemed to no avail as the crime comics kept on coming.

Although Wertham claims that almost all the comics were crime comics, in actual fact the numbers

were quite small compared to funny animal titles. Thirty different crime comics were on the stands by the end of 1948 and by 1949 roughly one in seven comics was a crime comic.

Many historians feel that the smallest publishers were some of the worst purveyors of grisly, violent fare.

D.S. Publishing, for instance, lasted a very short time but managed seven titles in seven months during 1948. Comic Media and Story Comics were two other very small publishers who came and went. Story produced the very outrageous *Fight Against Crime* which soon turned to horror... and Comic Media produced *Johnny Dynamite*, a private detective in the Mickey Spillane mold, lasting nine issues between 1953 and 1954. *Johnny Dynamite* was well written and drawn and obviously meant for adult readers.

Then, in 1950, just as crime comics were toning down, there was a renaissance of depravity. And the new wave was led by one William M. Gaines.

Born in 1922, the son of comic book pioneer and All American line publisher Maxwell Gaines, Bill Gaines didn't have much interest in his father's business and wasn't too keen on comics. Then tragedy struck the Gaines' family when Bill's father was killed in a boating accident in 1947. A reluctant Bill found himself heir to a bunch of ho-hum comic titles that were going nowhere but down. Young Gaines, seeing the red ink on the ledgers, decided to do something to save the company. He canceled most of his father's titles and introduced new ones which fitted better into the postwar world. Two of the new books that came out in 1948 were *Crime Patrol* and *War Against Crime*.

Gaines disliked the poorly illustrated books of other publishers and realized that comic books could be an art form. He wanted only the best for his comics and Johnny Craig was one of the first of the greats to be taken on. He did much of the work on the two crime comics. Then came Al Feldstein. He and Bill Gaines shared much in common, both liking the old horror radio shows like *Inner Sanctum* and *Lights Out*. Soon Al Feldstein was not only illustrating but writing stories and editing the comics as well.

In early 1950 Entertaining Comics (EC) changed *Crime Patrol* into *Crypt of Terror* (to be rechristened *Tales from the Crypt* a couple of issues later) and *War Against Crime* became *Vault of Horror*. Shortly after came *Haunt of Fear* and EC's trilogy of horror were to shock and delight a nation... and still do to this day. Then in the latter part of the year just as the U.N. forces in Korea were beginning to turn the tide against the communist North Koreans, Gaines launched a crime comic to end all crime comics, *Crime SuspenStories*.

For example, "In Each and Every Package" (*Crime SuspenStories* #22, April/May 1954) offered a dark, dark tale. Moodily drawn by the terrific Reed Crandall, the story concerns Norman, Bertha and Sally. Norman is married to Bertha and is going to kill his wife to enable him to have Sally...

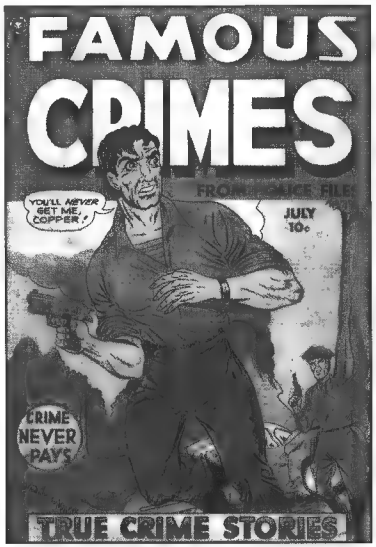
"Norman moved through the upstairs hallway toward the bedroom. When he reached the doorway, he stopped. He stared grimly in at Bertha, his wife. She was humming softly as she packed her clothes into the open suitcase on the bed. Norman shuddered. The time had come. The weeks of hoping and planning were almost over now. Sally was in New York, waiting for him. She'd finished with her part of the scheme. Now it was up to Norman to complete his. He gripped the axe he held behind his back tightly and stepped into the bedroom..."

This introduction is Al Feldstein's genius at his best. Feldstein's writing reads more like novelette than a comic. (Some have even suggested that his comic writing was far better than many short stories, even novels, of the time). Though a very disturbing tale, "In Each and Every Package" is a triumph of imaginative storytelling. (It is so good, in fact, I'm not going to say more except to say you can obtain the beautiful reprint facsimiles of this and ALL EC comics from Russ Cochran, Gemstone Publishing, 4 Court Square, West Plains, MO 65775, tel. 1-800-EC-CRYPT. I know I am giving a shameless, unabashed plug... but it is for good reason. EC Comics are incredible!)

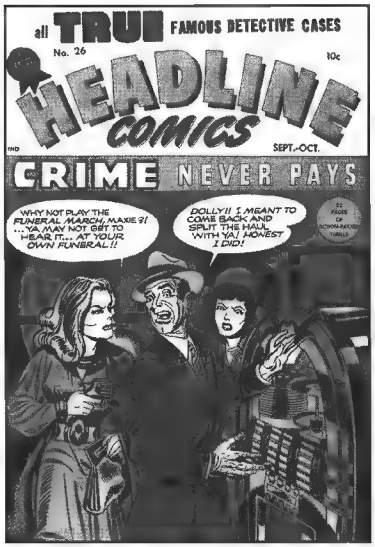
But even EC sometimes stepped over the boundaries of good taste on occasion. Consider just two issues of *Crime SuspenStories* that came under fire. One was issue #20, and the other issue #22.

Had there been a crucifix available in 1954, Gaines would have surely been nailed up on it for these two. Looking at the covers of #20 and 22 one can perhaps see why.

There is little doubt that EC was the scapegoat to end all scapegoats. The small company which published a mere nine titles at its height, and was regarded with distaste... and competition... by the larger groups. Try as they may nobody could match EC's quality or sales. So when Wertham and the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency singled out EC, the other publishers were secretly pleased. Gaines was alone and unaided by any in the industry.



A scarce copy of Famous Crimes #18 (Jul 1950). All Fox titles from this period are presently in very high demand, almost regardless of condition.


all TRUE FAMOUS DETECTIVE CASES
No. 26
10¢
HEADLINE COMICS
SEPT.-OCT.
CRIME NEVER PAYS
WHY NOT PLAY THE FUNERAL MARCH, MAXIE?! ...YA MAY NOT GET TO HEAR IT... AT YOUR OWN FUNERAL!!
DOLLY!! I MEANT TO COME BACK AND SPLIT THE HAUL WITH YA! HONEST I DID!

Simon & Kirby's Headline Comics #26 (v3#2, Sep/Oct 1947).

Bulge-Master?

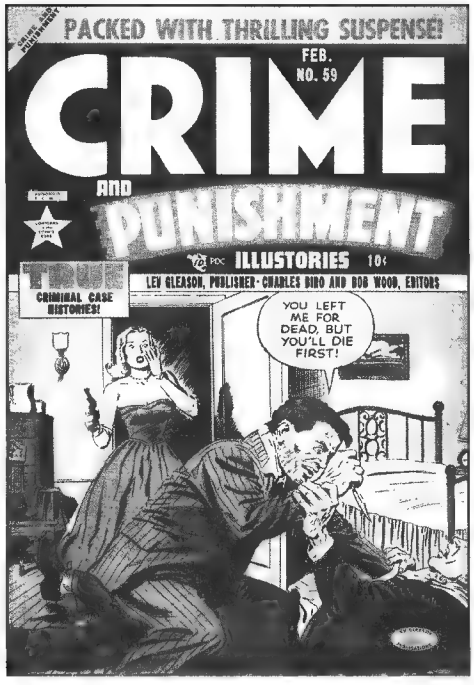
As Wertham waged his war against EC specifically (and crime comics in general), the field of battle expanded to include some unlikely targets. Wertham called *Superman* and *Mighty Mouse* "crime books" and labeled Batman & Robin homosexuals. Wertham also noted that crime comics carried advertisements for toys and seemed aimed at the very young. By 1953 there were something like 500 different comic books that apparently sold 60 million copies a month.

It seemed that time was running out for the comics industry. Public hysteria was at an all time high. State after state passed legislation to ban crime comics from their newsstands. Distributors and newsstands were threatened with closure, and even violence. Comic book burnings took place in cities across the nation, including Phoenix Arizona, Sacramento California, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, among others.

Some, like the comic division of Fawcett, weary after 13 years of battle with DC, threw in the towel. Fawcett's crime titles were *Suspense Detective, Underworld Crime, Down With Crime,* and *Mike Barnett, Man Against Crime.* Apart from *Mike Barnett*, none showed Fawcett's name on the covers, a practice also followed by Harvey with its horror and war comics. Fawcett's crime comics were fairly intelligent, with good stories and good art by the likes of George Evans and Bob Powell.

Others bowed out before and after the house of Capt. Marvel. D.S. pulled the plug in 1949; Fox Features in 1953 (actually they quit earlier but some of their titles were issued with new numbering by M.S. Distribution in 1953); and Hillman dumped its reasonably good *Crime Detective* and *Real Clue Crime Stories* in 1953.

Avon Periodicals had a number of crime books to its name, though a number were one-shots. *Famous Gangsters, Murderous Gangsters, Parole Breakers, Behind Prison Bars, Police Line-Up, Prison Break* and *Gangsters and Gun Molls* were all published between 1951 and 1952. These better-than-average books contained art by Wally Wood, Everett Kinstler, Syd Shores, Joe Kubert and Mort Lawrence. Avon thumbed its nose at Dr. Wertham when it published *Reform School Girl* under its Realistic Banner. "The graphic story of boys and girls running wild in the violence-ridden slums of today" said the blurb over the title. The picture and title were lifted from an Avon pocket book published in 1948.



Mentioned in Seduction Of The Innocent, Crime and Punishment #59 (Feb 1953) was used by Wertham as part of his indictment against the comic industry. © LEV GLEASON PUBL

Wertham said of the comic in his best-selling book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), that it "blends sex, violence and torture in its context." He didn't care for the advertisement featuring a figure enhancing device, either. Called a "Bulge-Master" this miracle worker sold for $5.95.

In Indianapolis, crime and horror stories were banned and New York passed a similar law only to have it vetoed by Republican governor Thomas Dewey. In Canada, legislation was passed to ban, outright, all American crime comics; the Minister of Justice of the Dominion of Canada called *Crime Does Not Pay* a "shocking instance of abuse of freedom of the press." As far as Wertham was concerned, *Crime Does Not Pay* was one of the "worst comic books, a veritable primer for teaching Junior juvenile delinquency."

The Coming of the Code

Then on April 21, 1954, the Senate Committee of the Judiciary to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency (under the chairmanship of Robert Hendrickson and aided by fellow Senators Estes Kefauver and Thomas Hennings) began their investigation into the effects of crime comics on children. Encouraged by Lyle Stuart, business partner and friend, William Gaines elected to go along to speak to the Committee. Fredric Wertham was the star witness for the prosecution.

The comics industry was conspicuous by its absence. Henry Schulz, general counsel for the Association of Comic Magazine Publishers, appeared on behalf of the industry. Enter Bill Gaines, alone and unsupported by his contemporaries, to face a barrage of hostile questioning from Estes Kefauver.

After the many hours of testimony, the Senators were deeply shocked by what they saw and heard… and Gaines had done nothing to change their belief. Shortly thereafter the senators released their report and everyone new the end of the crime comics was at hand.

Although the Committee fell short of recommending legislation to ban crime and horror comics, they suggested instead that the publishers clean up their industry… or the government might have to do it for them. The frightened industry announced the immediate formation of a strict comics code called the Comics Magazine Association of America. It was be headed by the New York Magistrate Charles F. Murphy who gave his word the new code would be the strongest ever adopted by the communications medium "… a code with teeth in it." And it was. Overnight, comic books became cleaner than clean.

EC Comics died. *Crime Does Not Pay* and *Crime And Punishment* adopted the new code but were so squeaky clean they didn't sell. After three or four Code approved issues, America's oldest crime comic was stopped. Prize Comics long running *Justice Traps the Guilty* continued for another three years, albeit with a washed out ghost of its former pre-Code contents. It was all over for the most notorious and infamous genre in the history of the industry. Crime comics were no more.

Like so many things, crime comics were a strange and unique corner of Americana… and an extraordinary chapter in the history of comic books. Long live their bloody memory.

Robert Kahn

Continued from page 54

MURRAY: Cool McCool *was one of yours.*

KANE: That was like *Get Smart*, only in animation. I did *The Silent Gun*. It was a movie about a gunfighter who gives up the gun and becomes a sheriff. That was in 1967, when Robert Kennedy was assassinated. The FCC didn't want too much violence on television. Paramount took it. I created the blind detective, *Longstreet*. But I lost the credit only because the lawyer couldn't negotiate it. So they did it anyway.

MURRAY: *I didn't know that! That was with James Franciscus. Bruce Lee was in it, too.*

KANE: That was the one. It only ran 13 weeks because people didn't like to look at blind people. My initial idea was called *Frank Murdock, Blind Eye*. And they changed it to *Longstreet*. Mine was a private eye. In order not to be sued, they changed it to an insurance investigator. And I had a wonder dog, like Rin-Tin-Tin, that would help him. They had a dog that did nothing but walk him around the place. Mine was more exciting.

MURRAY: *Other than yourself, who is your favorite Batman artist?*

KANE: Dick Sprang. Because he imitated me the nearest. I think a ghost artist's job is to emulate the artist as closely as possible. Most artists bring their own personality. Jerry Robinson had a very sketchy style. He may have drawn more illustratively than I did, but he wasn't as clean. *Dick Tracy* was what I was trying to do. Jerry brought a whole different dimension to it, as all the other ghost artists did. But Dick Sprang, to this day, still has my cartoony style. He was the best. He still is, I never met Dick, incidentally. He lives out of town.

MURRAY: *Jack Schiff once said of you: "I would say that nobody who drew Batman could capture his inimitable style. Even though it wasn't from a purely artistic point of view, as technically developed as many of the others, he would inject the Batman with that dynamism and spirit that kids liked.*

KANE: Thank you.

MURRAY: *I could always tell a Bob Kane thing from anybody else's. Jerry Robinson tried to imitate it, but never succeeded.*

KANE: It wasn't his style. It was my style. Sprang was the nearest to me.

MURRAY: *Schiff said even Sprang didn't come close.*

KANE: He was more comic that I was. I had a uniqueness. Let's face it. There's an old saying, "To the victor goes the spoils," and they deserve it because we created the whole essense of the strip. Without me, there wouldn't be a strip. It's not an ego thing. I have my own style. Nobody could ever emulate my style. It was an original. Nobody can imitate an originator.

Although they kept saying, like Jules Fieffer, that I was crude here and there. They were not crude. They may have been crude the first few issues, looking for the style—the cape and all that. If you look at my early books, they really came on strong a year later. The drawings were excellent. Some of them overdrew the character. They made him look like Sloan's Liniment ads with all the muscles. Underacting and underdrawing—simplicity—is better than overdoing it, in acting or writing or drawing. I don't agree that anybody ever made the Batman better. They might have improved the anatomy here and there. But it lost the uniqueness of the character. A point of fact is that if you go to a Sotheby's auction, one Bob Kane original will get you $10-25,000 dollars, and a ghost artist like Jerry Robinson will get you $100 dollars. They'd rather have me than Jerry Robinson.

MURRAY: *When did you actually leave Batman?*

KANE: I stayed til 1966. And Finger was still on the stories until I left, I think. Bill died in '74.

MURRAY: *Do you still keep up with your character in comics?*

KANE: I don't follow *Detective Comics* and *Batman* as much because out here in California, there are no corner candy stores where you could browse and buy comic books. But I followed it again with the resurgence of *The Dark Knight*.

MURRAY: *What did you think of Frank Miller's interpretation?*

KANE: I thought it was quite an innovation. It had some political overtones I'm not sure I read into correctly. There were Nazi symbols. It was a little bit too right-wing. I'm not sure I understood the story that well because it's a great departure from the traditional stories in *Batman*. I think Frank Miller's a classic writer, a classic artist, but I'm not sure I know what he's taking about half the time.

The face and the drawing were all so different. At 50, Batman looked much older. It wasn't the Bruce Wayne I remember, like my image of a young Robert Wagner. I found myself looking at something that I didn't know. It looked completely alien. I thought it was very avant garde. But how do you knock success? It sold out, so apparently we had to graduate from the early days where the naive Batman stories were selling, to today. They probably wouldn't sell if we kept up that same genre.

MURRAY: *What is your favorite Batman era?*

KANE: (*Laughs*) Obviously, the years when I drew it. I'd say it's like sex. When you're starting and learning, kiddo. Of all the women I might have had in my youth, I'd say the first girlfriend I still remember. To me that was the most exciting, and adventuresome, because you didn't know where you were going with it. It was virgin territory, so to speak. Literally and figuratively. That's how drawing Batman was for me. It's the learning process. Getting there is more fun than arriving. I had more excitement in the creative era than I did arriving, years later with the big success of Batman. I would draw 12-14 hours a day until I'd get nosebleeds from bending over the board. I had a studio in New York, in the Times Building, with Jerry Robinson, George Roussos and Bill Finger. What an adventure that was. Even today at this mellow age, you may have more money and fame, but I'd rather be young again, and starting and groping. It was just a thrilling era.

MURRAY: *Had there never been a Batman, how would you prefer your career to have gone?*

KANE: I would have preferred to be a slapstick cartoonist, like on *Mutt and Jeff* or *Popeye*. I was a better cartoony artist than I was an illustrator. You know, people have knocked my work, saying it's stiff. I can't semi-draw as well as some of the illustrators who took over Batman, like Carmine Infantino and Neal Adams. However, I was an innovator. I didn't *never* want my style to look too illustrative. I wanted it to look more like *Dick Tracy*. That's why the Penguin is cartoony and the Joker is a little cartoony. I did combine the two. I had Batman as illustrative as I wanted him to be. I simplified all the muscles. I didn't overbuild them. I could draw technically better if I wanted to, but I wanted it simplified.

So, my style evolved, and within a year, I had it down pretty much as I wanted it to be. I didn't think the illustrators or the ghost artists ever improved upon my work. I really don't. Just because they drew it better, didn't mean it *was* better.

MURRAY: *Any final thoughts?*

KANE: All in all, it has been a very lucrative and successful career, and I have no regrets about it. I only wish Siegel and Shuster fared as well. They were terrific. If not for them, I wouldn't have created Batman nor would there be a comic book industry. Our two creations initiated more than 1,000 superheroes, at least. They're all one offshoot or another of Superman and Batman.

UNSUNG SILVER AGE CREATOR

After decades of work in television and film, director/writer/artist Pat Boyette turned his back on both the big screen and the small, to infuse Charlton Comics and Warren Magazines with his unique sense of the atmospheric, the macabre, and the surreal…

by J. David Spurlock

Pat Boyette's Charlton Chillers!

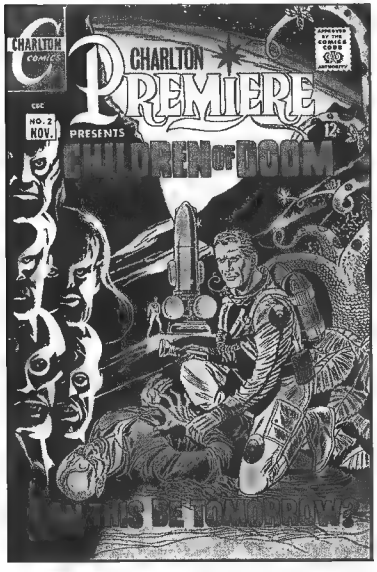
THROUGH THE NIGHTS OF TERROR, AARON PARIGEE'S LEGION ROAMED WITH IMMUNITY TO DISEASE AND REVOLUTION... COLLECTING THE HUMAN REFUGE THAT LITTERED THE STREETS AND DOORWAYS...

E.C.—the greatest exponents of pre-Code crime and horror—threw in the towel shortly after the start of the Comics Code. Authority. Harvey Comics had produced some great work also, featuring art by Lee Elias and Howard Nostrand. But Harvey's crime/horror stories relied heavily on gore and shock value, and collectors generally agree that the writing was never as inspired as E.C.'s. In spite of the demise of EC, Harvey, and so many other early comic book publishers, south Texas television personality and B-movie director, Pat Boyette, remained a big comic fan. So much a fan of mystery comics in fact, that he took every opportunity to influence San Antonio broadcasters to produce programming with similar themes. Some of his TV successes include the creation of the late-night television program *Project Terror*. In the early

Artwork shown is from the new *Tales from the Edge Special: Pat Boyette's Nightstand Chillers*.

1960s, Boyette convinced a station to pick-up Alex Toth's legendary animated series *Space Angel*. Pat also produced an ahead-of-its-time X-Files/Unsolved Mysteries-style series for radio entitled *The Standec Report* and made a number of B-movies including the cult favorite, *Dungeon of Harrow* as well as *The Weird Ones* and *The Girls from Thunder Strip*.

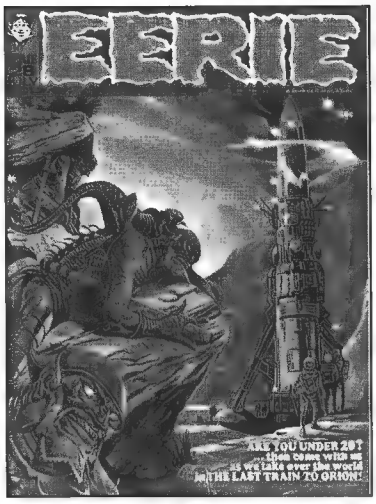
Then Boyette made an unusual decision during the Silver Age—to give up film, radio, and TV



in favor of comics. Looking for a company that was publishing EC-style color horror and mystery anthologies, he found the closest thing still in print… Charlton Comics. Almost over night, Boyette became a top talent for Charlton, second only to Steve Ditko. From '67 on, you'd be hard pressed to find a Charlton horror or ghost anthology that didn't include at least one Boyette story.

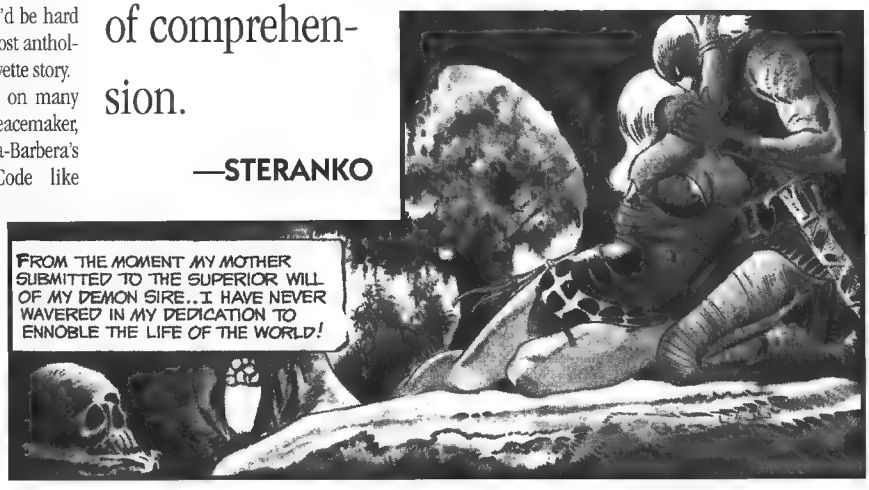
Although Boyette went on to work on many well-known characters (including Peacemaker, Phantom, DC's Blackhawk, and Hanna-Barbera's Scooby Doo), it was the pre-Code like horror/crime/mystery short stories that he favored the most.

Pat worked to make his material as pre-Code-like as possible. For example, the CCA insisted that no panels showed decapitated heads. Boyette—fond of using decapitation as a story element—found a loop-hole by using shrunken heads! He even used the idea on the cover of *The Ghosts of Dr. Graves* #1 (1967).



Boyette's pages are frequently masterpieces of baroque composition, textural patterns, and unified imagery–but never at the expense of comprehension.

—STERANKO


FROM THE MOMENT MY MOTHER SUBMITTED TO THE SUPERIOR WILL OF MY DEMON SIRE..I HAVE NEVER WAVERED IN MY DEDICATION TO ENNOBLE THE LIFE OF THE WORLD!

Boyette's art has a wonderfully organic quality–similar in many ways to the work of John Severin and Wally Wood. The macabre atmosphere which permeates his mystery work—writing as well as illustration—has been compared by some to "Ghastly" Graham Ingels. Others have suggested that his tales could be storyboards for Hammer horror films… exactly the kind of films he would have continued to make if he hadn't opted to move into the world of comics.

Pat Boyette is an unsung hero of the pre-Code type horror B&W magazines of the '60s. As most *CBM* readers know, these comic-magazines were designed specifically to circumvent the Code… and pay homage to the pre-Code horror comics of the previous decade. The first and best of these were the Warren magazines, *Creepy, Eerie,* and *Vampirella*. Perhaps in an effort to stress the pre-Code connection, Warren hired many famous pre-Code artists. Included in the Warren bullpen were EC greats such as Al Williamson, Wally Wood, Jack Davis, Frank Frazetta, Reed Crandall, Joe Orlando, and Johnny Craig. The Warren lineup also included pre-Code veterans Alex Toth, Gene Colan, Steve Ditko, Angelo Torres, and others.

Boyette tells of how he first came to work for Warren Publishing, "Rocke Mastroserio (longtime Charlton artist) had started drawing for Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie*. He was having trouble with deadlines so he asked me to pencil for him. With his Charlton work, Rocke had a heavy schedule. On his third story for Warren, Rocke suddenly died from a heart attack. He was a friend and I've always regretted not having the opportunity to meet with him face-to-face… when we worked together, it was all by phone. At the time of his passing, we had a job on the board so I called Jim

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Warren and asked him if I should finish it. He gave the go-ahead… Jim liked the job and from then on, he printed almost everything I sent him."

For a very short period Boyette and Mastroserio (who had worked for Charlton since the pre-Code days) had made an excellent collaborative team. Like many pre-Code artists of his generation, Boyette almost always did his own inking and collaboration (even with friends like Rocke M.) which was very rare. The only two other instances were two stories that were penciled by Steve Ditko that Pat inked and a few stories he did with one-time associate Fred Himes.

Though Boyette felt the Warren magazines were more prestigious, he had to limit his output for the publisher to protect his bread-and-butter account, Charlton. Prestige came Boyette's way there as well… i.e. his magnum opus with Denny O'Neil, "Children of Doom" (*Charlton Premier* #2, 1967). The book has has come to be known as a masterpiece and the best book Charlton ever published.

Given the success of Warren B&W horror comic mags, it was inevitable that other publishers would follow suit and try to compete in the new format. The best of these competitors was Skywald, Atlas/Seaboard, and Marvel. These "magazine" comics, free of the confines of the Comics Code Authority allowed Boyette to let his imagination soar. It is from these rare sources that the bulk of Boyette's new *Nightstand Chillers* is culled. Locating all the material in the compilation was a miracle of sorts, as many of the originals were extremely difficult to locate. Quite often the reproductions are superior to the original, vintage, publications.

Fans of vintage comic book crime/horror/mystery should check out Boyette's *Nightstand Chillers*, a classic filled with story after story in the pre-Code style… complete with decapitations, dungeons, and rotting corpses.

As incredible as it sounds, the moderately priced tome also features an introduction by the great Alex Toth… analysis of Boyette's work by Jim Steranko… photos from (and text about) Boyette's films… and to top it all off, the only known complete Boyette horror comics checklist! Fans, collectors, and historians can get this great comic reference work at Vanguard Productions, 59A Philhower Road, Lebanon, NJ 08833 for just seven bucks (for the regular edition) or $15 for the limited signed edition.

All of us… whether horror/crime fans, Silver Age buffs, Warren Magazine collectors, or Charlton historians… owe a great debt to the talented, creative, and often uncredited Pat Boyette.

CBM CHECKLIST: BOYETTE FAVORITES

Compiled by Don Mangus

ARCHIE
Sorcery . .. 9 1974
Sorcery .. . 11 1975

CHARLTON
Attack .. ..3 .1973
Attack ....5 .1976
Attack 17 1981
Attack . .. .18 . .1982
Bttlfld Act on ...69 ...1981
Bttlfld Act on ...75 .1982
Bttlfld Act on ...74 .1982
Beyond/Grave 1975
Billy/Kid .. .... 68 . 1968
Billy/Kid .. .. . 96 .1979
Billy/Kid .. ....100 ..1973
Billy/Kid .. ..104 ..1973
Billy/Kid 105 1973
Billy/Kid .. . ..107 . 1974
Billy/Kid 109 1974
Bullseye .. ..5 . 1976
Premiere . ...1 . 1967
Premiere . ...2 .1967
Premiere . . ..4 ...1968
Cheyenne Kid ..99 ..1973
Creepy Things ..2 . 1976
F ghtin' Army...108... 1972
F ghtin' Army...112....1973
Fightin' Army...115... 1974
Fightin' Army...116 . 1974
Fightin' Army...119....1975
Fightin' Army...126....1976
Fightin' Army...138....1979
Fightin' Army...140....1979
Fightin' Army.....17....1984
Fightin' Five .....41 ...1967
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Fightin' Mrin ....111 .. 1973
Fightin' Mrin ....112 ...1973
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Fightin' Mrin 130 1976
Fightin' Mrin ....142 ..1979
Fightin' Mrin ....143 . 1979
Fightin' Mrin . 146 1979
Fightin' Mrin ....148 . 1980
Fightin' Mrin ....160 ..1982
Flash Gordon ..18 1970
Flash Gordon 17 1969
Flash Gordon .. 16....1969
Flash Gordon ..15 ..1969
Ghastly Tale ...104....1973
Ghost Manor ..2 ...1971
Ghost Manor ...12 ...1973
Ghost Manor . 13 ...1970
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Ghost Manor 19 .. 1974
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Ghost Manor .51 ...1980
Ghost Manor . .60 ...1981
Ghost Manor . 61 ...1982
Ghost Manor 64 . .1982
Ghostly Haunt..24....1972
Ghostly Haunt. 26....1972
Ghostly Haunt. 32....1973
Ghostly Haunt..33....1973
Ghostly Haunt..43....1975
Ghostly Haunt..52. ..1976
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Ghostly Tales 62. .1967
Ghostly Tales .63. .1967
Ghostly Tales 66. .1968
Ghostly Tales 67. .1968
Ghostly Tales . 68....1968
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Ghostly Tales .106....1973
Ghostly Tales .112....1974
Ghostly Tales .114....1975
Ghostly Tales 127....1978
Ghostly Ta es 132 ..1978
Ghostly Tales .130....1978
Ghostly Tales .137....1979
Ghostly Tales 144....1980
Ghostly Tales 155 . .1982
Haunted ....2 ...1972
Haunted ....8 ...1973
Haunted . ...13 . 1973
Haunted .. . ...14 . 1973
Haunted ... ...17 .. 1974
Haunted ... . .47 . 1980
Haunted ... ..55 .. 1981
Haunted v13 ...70 ..1970
Haunted ... .. 28 ...1976
Haunted .. .. 53 .. 1981
Haunted .....54 ...1981
Haunted Love . .7 ...1975
Haunted Love ...9 ...1975
Haunted Love 10....1975
Jungle Jim .....23 ...1969
Jungle Jim .. ....24 ...1969
Jungle Jim .. ....25 ...1969
Jungle Jim .. ....26 ...1969
Jungle Jim .. ....28 . .1970
Korg ....1 ...1975
Korg ....2 ...1975
Korg .. ..3 .. 1975
Korg .....4 ...1975
Korg .....5 ..1976
Korg ....6 ..1976
Korg ....7 ...1976
Korg .....8 ...1976
Many Ghosts Dr Graves (Ditko Inks) ...1 ..1967
Ghosts/Graves ...2 1967
Ghosts/Graves....4 ...1967
Ghosts/Graves ...5 1968
Ghosts/Graves....6 ...1968
Ghosts/Graves ...7 1968
Ghosts/Graves ...8 1968
Ghosts/Graves..10 ..1968
Ghosts/Graves....2 ...1970
Ghosts/Graves..23....1970
Ghosts/Graves..25....1971
Ghosts/Graves..32. ..1972
Ghosts/Graves..52....1975
Ghosts/Graves....7....1982
Ghosts/Graves..72....1982
Outer Space .....1 ...1968
Peacemaker .....1 ...1967
Peacemaker .....2 ...1967
Peacemaker.....3 ...1967
Peacemaker .....4 ...1967
Peacemaker .....5 ...1967
Phantom .....39 ...1970
Phantom .....40 ...1970
Phantom .....42 ...1971
Phantom .....43 ...1971
Phantom .....44 ...1971
Phantom .....45 ...1971
Phantom .....46 ...1971
Phantom .....47 . 1971
Phantom 48 1972
Phantom .....49 ...1972
Phantom .....50 ...1972
Phantom 52 1972
Phantom ....53 . 1972
Phantom .....54 ...1973
Phantom ..... .55 ...1973
Phantom ..... . 56 ..1973
Phantom ....57 . 1973
Phantom.....58 ...1973
Phantom .. ..59 . .1973
Scary Tales .....12 . .1978
Scary Tales . ..15 . .1978
Scary Tales .....22 ...1980
Scary Tales .....23 .1980
Shadow Beyond 50.1966
$6 MillionMan ...9....1978
$6 MillionMan ...7....1978
$6 MillionMan ...8.. 1978
Space1999Mag .5....1976
Space Advent .3.. 1979
Space Advent .3....1968
Space Advent .2....1968
Space Advent .4....1968
Space Advent ..6.. .1969
Space Advent .7....1969
Space 1999 . .7.. 1976
StrngeSuspense 1....1967
StrngeSuspense 2....1968
StrngeSuspense 3....1968
Thunderbolt ..57.. 1967
Thunderbolt ....59....1967
Thunderbolt . . 60.. .1967
War . ... .1 . 1975
War . . . 11 . 1979
War ... .17 ...1979
War . . . . . 33 . .1982
War/Attack .....58 . .1967
War/Attack ... .59 . .1967
War Hero .. 26 . 1967

D.C.
Blackhawk .....242 ...1968
Blackhawk .....243 . .1968
Claw 3 inks Chua .... .1975
Claw 4 inks Chua 1975
Jnexpected .112 ...1969
Jnexpected .113 ...1969
Jnexpected .116 ...1969
Jnexpected .162 ...1975
Witching Hour ..1 ...1969
W tching Hour ..4 ...1969
W tching Hour ..5 ...1969
W tching Hour 38 ...1974

MARVEL
Marvel Presents..1.. .1973

ATLAS
WeirdSuspense .1....1975
WeirdSuspense .2....1975

SKYWALD
Nightmare .....6 ...1971
Psycho .....1 . .1971

WARREN
Creepy (Rocke)18. ..1968
Creepy ... . 22 . 1968
Creepy ....33 ...1970
Creepy .... 35 . .1970
Creepy .... 39 ...1971
Eerie (Rocke) .. 15....1968
Eerie . . ..28 ...1970
Eerie . .. . 30 . .1970
Eerie . ... 33 . .1971
Vampirel a . 16 1970

Sold.

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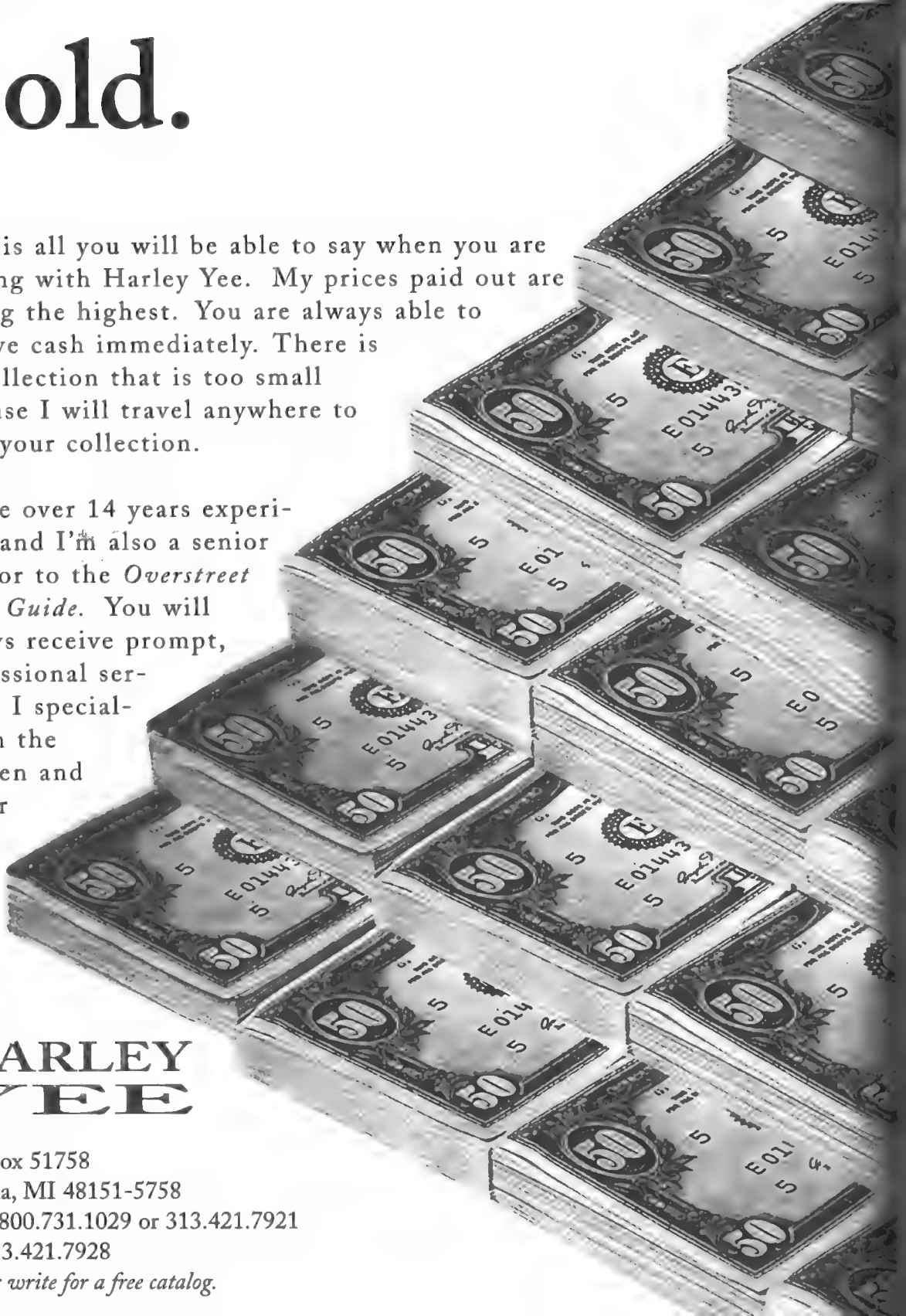

HARLEY YEE

P.O. Box 51758
Livonia, MI 48151-5758
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CRIME'S 10 MOST WANTED!

BY CLIFF WIENER & KEN DANKER

In many of the crime titles, extreme violence and brutality was the order of the day. Their pages revealed an "underworld" of cops, killers, and victims! Their stories were populated by women who were either weak and helpless... or sexy, sultry, and of questionable reputation.

And it's all the history, conflict, and controversy surrounding the crime comics genre that makes them so collectible. It's not just the graphic depiction of torture and mayhem that makes them so interesting to collectors and historians, it's the fact that comics... a children's entertainment medium... was the place where all the grisly stories were being published! Not TV, not the movies, and not radio... they wouldn't permit it! The crime comics, a children's item, had the gore... and that's the social irony that makes them so fascinating and collectible!

Their amazing history, combined with their pure shock value, has caused the crime comics genre (especially the more egregiously violent examples) to literally skyrocket in demand and value in the last few years (as any dealer will tell you). The following are my nominations for the "10 Most Wanted" crime comics (plus runner up), based on many hundreds of hours searching for them as well as discussing the "top wants" and "tough-to-find issues" with collectors from all over the country.

But what's most amazing about pre-Code crime comics is the *Guide* price. The Fine condition value is still amazingly low... and is thus a tremendous opportunity for investors and collectors. Even in 1998 (nearly four decades after the start of organized fandom) many of the most desirable crime books remain undervalued and fall into the "sleeper" category.

1. *Crime Does Not Pay* #24
(Nov 1942; Intro & 1st app Mr. Crime) The violence throughout the book makes it a classic and a solid pre-Code example of interest to either the crime collector or the horror collector. Be warned... *Crime Does Not Pay* #24 is very scarce. *Gerber* rates the book a 7 meaning 20-50 copies exist. Based on my experience actively searching out the book, I would say that this is pretty close to accurate. Locating a copy is very difficult and I suspect convincing the owner to part with it an even more arduous task.
1998 FN value=$225

2. *Fight Against Crime* #20
(Jul 1954; decapitation cover; hanging; ax murder; excessive blood & violence) Starting with issue #9, *Fight Against Crime* began a trend towards more and more violent stories and covers. This is especially evident as the title got closer to the end (the progression of extreme violence on the covers alone tells the story). One story contains the decapitation of an old woman (with an ax) followed by the consumption of the raw body parts of the dead woman by a dog (whew!). Most collectors agree that the cover of this book is an absolute and outrageous classic. It also ranks as the most requested of all pre-Code crime comics.
1998 FN value=$118

3. *Exposed True Crime Cases* #2
(May/Jun 1948; giggling killer story; excessive blood; injury to eye; electrocution) This one contains one of the most high impact gore stories ever to grace a crime comic. "The Giggling Killer" contains panels that are full of strangulation, torture, and maiming. 1998 FN value=$56

4. *Lawbreaker's Suspense Stories* #11
(Mar 1953; severed tongues cvr; negligee) The cover is simply horrifying. The man (maniac?) holding severed tongues in his hand is amazing, and the story inside is just as sickening.
1998 FN value=$178

5. *Strange Suspense Stories* #19
(Jul 1954; Ditko electric chair cover) A fabulous Ditko cover and one of the most infamous of all crime motifs... the electric chair. An in-demand book with fabulous early work by Ditko.
1998 FN value=$114

6. *Crime Reporter* #2
(Oct 1948; used in *SOTI*) Fredric Wertham made this comic famous with the quote "the children knew where the man was going to put the hot poker." There's also a nice Baker cover.
1998 FN value=$174

7. *Perfect Crime* #28
(Sept 1952) This one's not pictured in *Gerber*, but it's great. I was fortunate enough to have seen 2 copies initially, but I have not seen any in over a year for sale or otherwise. And the *Guide* price is ultra low! 1998 FN value=$23

8. *Underworld Crime* #7
(Jun 1953; bondage and torture cover) A classic crime bondage cover that has never been topped in my opinion. It has all the classic elements that make up a good crime cover. The scarcity of this book it is difficult to determine. I have found a few copies but they are never easy to locate and buy without paying well over *Guide*.
1998 FN value=$69

9. *Super-Mystery* V6/#3
(Dec 1945; torture story) One of the most potentially graphic covers ever printed. A girl is trapped in the clutches of a madman, while he is about to bring a paper cutter down across her neck. The book is tough in high grade (especially because of the black cover). However it should be noted that *Super Mysterys* in nice shape are rarely offered for sale. 1998 FN value=$56

10. *Thrilling Crime Cases* #49
(Jul 1952; classic L.B. Cole cover) What gallery of great crime/horror covers could be complete with out an example by Cole?! 1998 FN value=$98

Runner up:

***Criminals On The Run* V4/#7**
(Jun/Jul 1949; "Fish in the Face" cover by L.B. Cole) Another LBC classic cover but this has gotten the attention of collectors lately because of its "goofiness." 1998 FN value=$120

THE THING!

Continued from page 36

The Thing! #6 (Jan 1953)

Cover: Jungle tribesmen hold a fiery ritual with shrunken heads; Bob Forgione (signed).

Frontpiece: "The Tale Of A Salem Witch" Giordano and Cappello (signed).

"Rock Bound Coast" Bob Forgione (signed); A haunted lighthouse spells danger and beckons unseen treasures to three criminals; 6 pages.

"Vengeance Will Be Mine" Dick Giordano (signed); An innocent man is executed while threatening revenge, then brought back to life by a scientist; 7 pgs.

"Riddle Of Benares" (2 pg text story).

"Warlock Of London" Collier (signed); A warlock and two ghouls drink a potion that makes them appear human long enough to find victims; 8 pgs.

"An Ancient Ghost Story" Giordano (signed) 1 page; A quickie like the frontispiece, only in color, so the page count worked out.

"Jibaro Madness" cover story (unsigned); A scientist wants to take a close look at the shrunken head tradition; Decapitation pg 5, panels 4-5; 8 pgs.

The Thing! #7 (Mar 1953)

Cover: A demon gouges out a man's eyes; Lou Morales (signed).

"Hell Ship" Bob Forgione (signed); Three criminals find doom aboard a haunted ship at the hands of a sadistic captain. Contains torture scenes. 7 pgs.

"Spiderman And His Web Of Doom" Bob Forgione (signed); Mr. Nemo (Omen backwards) transforms into a spider to eat tenants he rents to; 6 pages.

"The Thing From The Deep" (2 page text story).

"Give The Devil His Due!" John Belfi (signed); A man makes a deal with the Devil to save his farm... with surprising results. 3 pages.

"The Gorgon's Claw" John Belfi (signed) (cover story); A man commits murder as if a Gorgon were responsible to "prove [his] absurd ideas." 7 pages.

"The Ghosts Of Gombi!" Lou Morales (signed) 1 page;

"Haunt Of The Vampire" T.C. (signed); People on a plantation live next to a swamp which is the home of a group of thirsty vampires. 6 pages.

until cancellation.

• Overstreet suggests that *The Thing!* #7 (March 1953) contains "E.C. swipes from *Vault Of Horror* #28," but actually there are none.

• About *The Thing!* #13 (April 1954), *The Guide* says "Ditko E.C. swipe/Haunt Of Fear 15 (#1), "House Of Horror," but actually does not contain any swipes.

• Dick Ayers really laid on the cheesecake whenever the wife of the employer graced a panel (The Thing! #12, February 1954).

• The covers on issues #16 and #17 are the only two which are not related to the stories inside.

• Although Bob Powell drew pre-Code crime for Gleason from 1953-54, and pre-Code horror for Marvel from 1950-54, the 12 page story in *The Thing!* #17 is the longest story (and the only reprint) in the entire run. *Thing!* readers may have falsely assumed the horror host visible at the beginning and end of the Powell reprint because they thought it was their first (and only) glimpse of the Thing, but it is actually the horror host of *Beware Terror Tales,* who was famous for saying things like "I am the Mummy!" No explanation was given in *The Thing!* #17 for the anomaly, but the character is there... and uniquely out of place!

• The story "Cinderella" from *Thing!* #12 contains historic early examples of Ditko-style sexual sadism and headlights, and stands as an all time classic pre-Code horror story.

• *Overstreet* gives a general hint of *Thing!* contents when noting that "excessive violence, severed heads, [and] injury to eye [are] common #5 on." Many of the stories have criminals as protagonists, which is a common genre mix with horror. Although other pre-Code titles were singled out by Wertham, like *Chamber Of Chills,* which *Overstreet* describes as containing "bondage, torture, sadism, perversion, gore, cannibalism," and other qualities like those found in *The Thing!*. The scarcity of the *Thing!* comics, as well as their value, greatly exceeds the other pre-Code horror titles, actually dwarfing the other examples from 1954! The Steve Ditko issues, especially #12 and 13, are especially hard to come by.

• The story "Avery And The Goblins" in *The Thing!* #13 (April 1954) depicts a group of demons enjoying a gory human flesh banquet: "What delicious, sweet meat! What tender flesh! What succulent bones!" It's a succulent moment for Steve Ditko and horror comics collectors as well!

• In "The Evil Eye!" in *The Thing!* #14 (June 1954) on page 5, panel 2, a man's dead wife brands his forehead with a hot poker, and later in panel 7 the man is shown to say amidst much blood, "M-my hands... They've been chewed off! And my legs... Good Lord... nothing but bloody stumps where my feet were!" Accurately noted as "extreme violence/torture" in Overstreet, this is pre-Code horror at its gruesome extreme

• The *Price Guide* suggests *Thing!* #16 (September 1954) has a Rudy Palais cover, but Palais didn't draw any stories for *The Thing!* The cover appears to be by Jack Davis-influenced "Kirk."

As the end drew near, the final throws of the title were less than noble... from a horror/crime collector's point of view. Imagine if you were a reader unfortunate enough to have sent in your subscription money right before the Comics Code took affect. Think of how disappointed you must have been when your first issue arrived in the mail. Instead of finding "The Thing!" emblazoned on the cover of your long-anticipated first issue, your startled eyes found instead only *Blue Beetle* #18 (February 1955) in the place of the promised horror mag. For the next six months, *Blue Beetle* continued until

The Thing! #8 (May 1953)

Cover: A man's ancestors emerge from a mirror; Bob Forgione (signed).

First story: "The Ghost Of Abbey Playhouse" Bob Forgione (signed) (cover story); A man's ancestors warn him about his gold-digger wife; 7 pages.

"A Grave Situation" John Belfi (signed); A group of treasure hunters meet doom when they kill the man who leads them to it; 7 pages.

"The Riddle Of Glamis" (unsigned); 1 page filler.

"Commander Rex Clive And The Twelfth Moon" (2 page text story).

"Vein Of Irony" Bob Forgione (signed); A vampire finally drinks the blood of the wrong victim; 5 pages; The Thing says it's a "banquet of gore and violence."

"The Haunted Bridge" (unsigned); 1 page filler.

"Death Has Deep Roots" (Bob Forgione) (signed B. F.); A old man is murdered by five criminals who meet doom through a possessed tree; 8 pages.

The Thing! #9 (Jul 1953)

Cover: A cloaked killer carries his female victim through the sewers.

"Mardu's Masterpiece" Bob Forgione (signed) (cover story); An artist uses human blood to instill life in his paintings with tragic results; 7 pages; Carrying a body on page 5, panel 6, lead character says "Must hurry [and] get rid of this hideous, bloodless corpse!"

"The Road To Madness" Forgione and Alascia (signed); A greedy collector of diamonds who kills to acquire them violently searches the jungle; 8 pages.

"The Skull Stretchers" (2 pg text story).

"Operation Massacre" John Belfi (signed); Used in SOTI, the story concerns a scientist who invents a way to control robots with thoughts alone, and a jealous colleague who murders him and tries to take over the world; 6 pages.

The Dead Man's Hand" Bob Forgione (signed B. F.); A controlling, selfish pianist is burned to death by his wife and lover, only to return for revenge; 8 pages.

The Thing! #10 (Sep 1953)

Cover: 3-story horror collage for "Into The Fire!", "Death Has Three Fingers", and "The Devil's Kiss!" (unsigned).

"Flower Of Evil" Bob Forgione (signed); A deranged botanist grows giant plants which ultimately prove to be his downfall; 8 pgs.

"Into The Fire!" (unsigned); A paroled convict working for a mausoleum kills his boss and tries unsuccessfully to cremate the remains; 5 pages.

"Rain Of Terror" (unsigned); A scientist has some seed packets stolen by a common thief, which in the rain become thousands of deadly spiders; 2 pages.

"Darkness" (2 page text story).

"Death Has Three Fingers" Forgione and Alascia (signed); A werewolf is hunter and hunted; 6 pages.

"Mark Of Violence" (unsigned); A vampire is beheaded yet manages to drink blood anyway; 4 pages.

"The Devil's Kiss!" (unsigned); A woman at a masquerade party is captivated by a guest dressed as the Devil, and offers to be his queen; 4 pages.

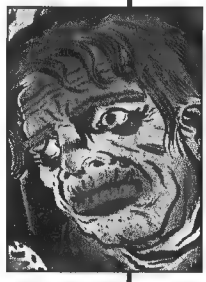
The Thing! #11 (Nov/Dec 1953)

Cover: Touched-up splash from "Hansel And Gretel" with old hag holding meat cleaver; Forgione and Alascia (unsigned).

"Hansel And Gretel" Forgione and Alascia (signed); A young couple on their honeymoon have car trouble and end up spending the night with a ghoul; 7 pages.

"The Glitter Of Evil" Sid Check (signed S. C.); Natives trying to help a seaman suffering with a fever are robbed at gunpoint by his foolish companion; 6 pages.

"Smog Over Shoreville" (2 page text story).



Beyond The Past!" Lou Morales (signed); A professor reading incantations from the Necronomicon is eaten by the monster he summons; 4 pages.

"Deep Freeze" Forgione and Alascia (signed); A military mission to the North Pole gets eaten by a frozen dinosaur that wakes up hungry! 6 pages.

"Blind Vengeance" (John) Belfi (signed); A greedy gambler kills the executor of his will when he refuses to advance him money; 6 pages.

THE THING!

The Thing! #12 (Feb 1954)

Cover: Vampires drink blood on stairwell; redrawn panel from "Cinderella"; S. J. Ditko (signed); 1st Ditko cover.

"Cinderella" [Steve] Ditko (signed); Cinderella is held captive and forced to work for 4 vampires who torture her; Wonderful Ditko art & outrageous pre-Code violence make this story a real collector's gem; 8 pages.

"Melvin Comes Home!" Dick Ayers (signed); Desiring his employer's wife and money, a man contracts another to commit murder; Ayers headlights and cheesecake; 7 pgs.

"The Thing's Revenge" (2 pg text story).

"The Mummy's Curse" John Belfi (signed); An evil person is mummified alive and and returns to life when a scientist electrifies the corpse; 5 pgs.

"Food For Thought!" (unsigned); 1 pg.

"The Sound Of Death" Enraged over bad reviews, a violinist kills critics with high pitch notes; 6 pages.

"Greed" Anthony Tallarico (signed); A man obsessed with his origins gets a witch to raise his dead ancestors, all the way back to a "mutant gorilla!"; 2 pages.

The Thing! #13 (April 1954)

Cover: Demons flow out of a magic book; redrawn panel from first "Library Of Horror"; [Steve] Ditko (signed).

"Library Of Horror" [Steve] Ditko (signed); A writer of weird stories makes a familiar bargain to gain success with his stories; 7 pages.

"Die Laughing!" Steve Ditko (unsigned); A fraternity prank set in a haunted house goes awry; 7 pages.

"The Witch Fish" (2 page text story)

"A-Tisket A-Casket!" Anthony Tallarico (signed); Two men think they'll find treasure in an old Egyptian casket but (surprise!) find a mummy instead; 2 pages.

"Avery And The Goblins" [Steve] Ditko (signed); Treasure hunters never return but get eaten by flesh eating demons for 15 years before an old man tries to make the dreadful journey through the monsters' castle himself; 8 pages.

"Poor Fish!" (unsigned); A mugger who nicknames his unwitting victims "poor fish" ends up in a close encounter with a "fishy" ending; 4 pages.

it was canceled with issue #21 (August 1955). To make matters even worse for *Blue Beetle* readers, the only comic with any new material was issue #21, some of which (at least) was drawn by Al Fago. (Some of these *Blue Beetle* issues even had Bouncer reprints! Ugh!)

Then, just to ad insult to injury, the title was finally transformed for two terrible issues into the worst title of all, *Mr. Muscles*. Issue #22 was dated March 1956 and #23 August 1956… mercifully ending a previously wonderful run and adding yet another sad casualty to the list of greats killed by the Code…

Yet for 17 glorious (and gory) issues, outstanding talent, historical firsts, and *SOTI* infamy, make Charlton's early horror/crime masterpiece a real treasure to collect.

Jon McClure has been a collector, dealer, and researcher for 26 years. He and lives with his wife Dyan, son Daniel, and their four cats. In real life Jon is sales manager for a music publishing company. Dedicated to Duane Clark, Lillian Lang, and Ken Periman.

It took Jon 5 ½ years and over $2,000 to get all but #13, which was kindly loaned to him by Kenneth "Doctor" Director, so he could finish this article. Thanks, Kenneth!

The Thing! #14 (Jun 1954)

Cover: Redrawn panel: Flying demons strangle women in ancient Egypt; [Steve] Ditko (signed).

"Rumpelstiltskin" Steve Ditko (unsigned); A contest among demons to see who is the most gifted of them all proves costly to the king; 8 pages.

"The Evil Eye!" signed S. Ditko; A gambler murders his wife for her money and she returns from the dead to exact her revenge; 7 pages.

"Mr. Kon Shuns" (2 page text story).

"Doom In The Air" Steve Ditko (unsigned); A man wrongly accused of murder is reanimated by radiation and seeks revenge against his killers; 8 pages.

"Inheritance!" (cover story) Steve Ditko (signed); An ancient curse proves to follow a man's lineage when he least expects it; 5 pages.

The Thing! #15 (Jul/Aug 1954)

Cover: A giant worms wreaks havoc on an entire city; [Steve] Ditko (signed); One of S.D.'s most recognized cvrs.

"The Worm Turns" [Steve] Ditko (signed); A scientist tries to create an impervious form of life with disastrous results. One of Ditko's finest; 6 pgs.

"Day Of Reckoning!" [Steve] Ditko (signed); A rich, aged skinflint is sealed inside his own ship when he tries to default on paying his employees; 6 pgs.

"Comeback!" Flexo the rubber man murders Satana the snake lady to steal her fortune, but she returns and melts him into goo; 5 pages.

"Tunnel To Terror" (2 page text story).

"If Looks Could Kill!" [Steve] Ditko (signed); A surgeon, kidnapped by a hypnotist who blinds him, not only kills the hypnotist, he surgically implants the hypnotist's eyes in his own head, and proceeds to burn people to death by looking at them (whew!); 6 pages.

"Family Mixup" [Steve] Ditko (signed); A husband and wife who despise each other take out insurance policies and try to arrange the death of one another; 5 pages.

The Thing! #16 (Sep 1954)

Cover: Two ghouls walk through a graveyard, one carrying a girl; Kirk (unsigned).

"Nothing He Couldn't Do!" [Dick] Ayers (signed); Men captured by cannibals on a island try to trade for their freedom without success; 6 pages.

"Death Of A Gambler!" Shuster and Alascia (signed); A gambler who loses everything and ends up homeless finally has a change of luck...or does he; 6 pages.

"Tara Tusta" (2 page text story).

"Picture Of The Future!" Moskowitz (signed); Two burglars kill a museum guard and find a projector which reveals the future, and they don't like it; 6 pages.

"Mental Wizard!" (unsigned); A mind reader trips across a man who has murdered his wife and they end up getting each other killed as a result; 5 pages.

"The Crusher" (unsigned); A plantation owner discovers his wife and young foreman are having an affair, so he kills her lover, but it doesn't end there; 5 pages.

The Thing! #17 (Nov 1954)

Cover: A wizard evokes a demon amidst smoke and fire; [Steve] Ditko (signed).

"Through The Looking Glass!" Kirk (signed); An outrageous Lewis Carroll parody wherein Alice is so evil that she kills the creatures who menace in her nightmarish dreamland. Wertham would have had a field day with this story, which has the little girl saying things like "I'll bash your skull in next time!" The humorous story has shocking horrific elements. 6 pgs.

"Bad Blood!" [Dick] Ayers (signed); A man murders his uncle to inherit his castle and wine collection and parties 'til dawn, but his uncle wants revenge; 5 pgs.

"Wishful Thinking!" Kirk (signed); A vampire finds victims on a ship bound for Europe until marooned on an island with fresh blood in short supply; 5 pgs.

"Horror On The Hill" (2 pg text story).

Fourth story: "Weird Legend Of Trelawney" Bob Powell (unsigned); An evil man and his three vicious dogs haunt any trespassers who dare encounter them; 12 pgs; reprint from *Beware Terror Tales* #1, 5-'52.

THE MICHAEL NAIMAN REPORT

Undergrounds, Magazines, & Grading

Welcome to the new CBM Market Report and MarketWatch section! In the months to come, I'll be presenting expanded market reports, personal observations, and market analyses of comic books, original art, and related comic book collectibles.

Undergrounds!

Perhaps it's time that the Price Guide begins to list the long ignored and disregarded genre known as the Underground Comics... or is it Comix?

While not politically correct by today's standards, these books are a direct reflection of the exciting and turbulent times of the late 1960s... when American culture got a heavy dose of youthful revolutionary tantrums.

Comic book dealers from around the country have been selling undergrounds since their inception. In fact, undergrounds might be one of the first examples of direct market comic book distribution! Jay Kennedy authored The Official Underground and Newave Comix Price Guide (Boatner Norton Press) in 1982, but, that has been the first and last attempt at documenting the phenomenon via a price guide/index. From my view, there appears to be an inconsistency with the decision not to publish "Underground" price listings in Overstreet. The OPG currently lists DC/Vertigo and Verotik titles which are "mature themed" and include graphic language, violence, drug use and graphic nudity. Where's the difference between graphic language, violence, drug use and graphic nudity... and a humorous Parody of graphic language, violence, drug use and graphic nudity?

Titles such as Tasty, Zap, Yellow Dog, Freak Brothers, Big Ass, Feds 'n' Heads, Tasty, Motor City, Ghost Mother, Uneeda, and XYZ have fascinated the boomer generation and their offspring for decades. Who could forget such memorable characters as Mr. Natural, Fritz the Cat, Shuman the Human, Fat Freddy, Phineas and Freewheelin' Franklin? Within these pages you were introduced to artists whose styles set them apart from the mainstream "funnybook" establishment of the day and in turn, created a Panepictographic Pantheon of their own... Robert Crumb, Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso, Gilbert Shelton, Robert Williams, S. Clay Wilson, and ever heard of a guy by the name of Denis Kitchen? He was there too!

Recent Underground sales - The Official Underground and Newave Comix Price Guide VF $50; 2 (S. Clay Wilson) NM $19; 3-D Deep VF/NM $15; Anomaly #4 (Corben) VF $30; Artistic Comics (Crumb) VF/NM $25; Austin Stone #2 VF/NM $45; Bijou Funnies #2 VF $70,#3 VF $40; Bizarre Sex #1 VF/NM $20; Captain Gits #1 (2nd print) VF $15; Cocaine Comix #2 NM $17; Death Rattle #1 NM $30; #2 NM $20; Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers #1 (1st print) VG+ $150 Fantagor #1 (1st print) VF $150, #1 (2nd print) NM $27; Feds 'n' Heads #1 (1st print) $250 Fritz the Cat (1st print) VF/NM $42; Gothic Blimp #6 VG $60; Hydrogen Bomb #1 VF $50; Hytone Comics #1 VF/NM $65; Insect Fear #1 VF $27; #2 VF $21; Man (V. Bode) #1 (1st print) VG+ $175; Merton of the Movement #1 VF/NM $11; New Adventures of Jesus #1 VF $65; Prophet #1 (1st print) VF $195; Psychotic Adventures #1 FN/VF $10; Schizophrenia (Cheech Wizard) NM $35; Skull #1 VF/NM $30; Slow Death #2 FN $12; #3 VF $20; Uncle Sham #1 NM $15; Weird Fantasies #1 FN $7; Weird Smut #1 FN/VF $10; Wimmen's Comix #1 NM $15; Zap #1 (1st print) VF+ $1000, #1 VG $100; #1 (3rd print) NM $30.

Auctions

If you are looking for undergrounds, comic art, Golden Age or Silver Age comics, re-creations, or Marvel runs, get ready to wave your auction paddle and push that redial button... the auction world is alive and well and comin' at ya! From the internet to the halls of Sotheby's you can purchase just about anything your heart desires and wallet can afford. *(Cont. on page 72)*

MARKET REPORTS

TED HAKE • HAKE'S AMERICANA

PO BOX 1444
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717•848•1333

Here are a few of our recent results from Auction #150. If you'd like one our catalogues, give us a call and mention that you saw it in CBM and we'll send you a free copy!

Comic Books - Famous Funnies Vol. #11 Issues 73-84 (Bound Volume) $460; Walt Disney's Comics and Stories Sears Giveaway VG $344; Four Color #639-Davy Crockett at the Alamo - VF $110.

The Phantom ⅞" full color litho button from the 1950s - excellent condition $128.

Pinbacks - Batman Character Buttons (Scarce) the following are 1" lithos from 1966 with an "N.P.P." copyright and the name "Creative House" on the curl. These buttons are are much more frequently seen in the ⅞" size. Batman $44, Batwoman $46, Robin/Dick Grayson $44, Joker $58, Penguin $46.

Superman button "Read Superman Daily in the Democrat" 1 ½" black on yellow one of the first buttons ever issued to promote the daily newspaper strip. Condition good with moderate wear and only the second example we've come across in 31 years! $865.

Superman of America colorful 1¼" members button from the late 1940s. One of the earliest issues but of the style with the shirt in a lighter rather than a very dark blue and with a light fleshtone coloring on the face and hands. Excellent condition $69.

Superman of America button similar to the previous button except the design has changed somewhat now Supe is sporting a dark blue shirt and a darker fleshtone, this variety does not include any copyright text. Excellent condition $60. *(Cont. on page 72)*

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Detective Comics © DC Comics, Inc
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Marvel Mystery Comics © Marvel Comics Group
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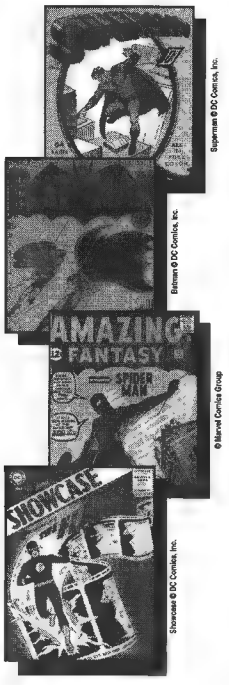

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NAIMAN REPORT CONTINUED

If you decide to pursue this path, I suggest you proceed cautiously if you are a newcomer. Every auction is a bit different and you should take the time to educate yourself. Call in advance and ask about the requirements for bidding. Be wary of those who want a percentage of your money "up front" before the auction and before you know if you are the winning bidder, ask if the auction house requires any type of licensing from the state in which they are operating, who is responsible for the shipping, postage and insurance, and find out if there is there an add-on premium to the sales price.

Recently completed auctions have yielded results which indicate that the marketplace is very hungry for books that fall into the VG to FN+ categories. These books are selling for amounts below Guide which in turn motivates the buyers to seek out even more books to purchase since they now appear to be getting more bang for their buck.

Bruce Edwards of Quasar Comics recently completed his 22nd auction and noted "...obscure comics from the 1970s and earlier have continued to do well. Probably because of the relatively low guide prices. The DC Giant Love comics from the early 1970s brought about 50% of Guide, which is actually a fortune considering what they went for only a couple years ago, but does indicate that they may be overvalued in the Guide. Horror comics, across the board, have been very strong, consistently selling between 80% and 200% of Guide with full Guide average. Mainstream Silver Age DC and Marvel, with some exceptions, are still overvalued in the Guide with most going for 45% to 75%. Some true NM issues did bring close to Guide. Archie comics are consistent sellers, especially since most of them are worth so little, I have many customers who buy them to enjoy reading! Big Little Books, original art, underground's, fanzines, pulps and esoteric comic related items have much higher interest than comics right now. Is this related to the fact that there are no established guides and the collector can still get what is perceived to be a great deal? Out of the 1,633 lots in the auction, 1,563 lots were sold (95.7% sell through!), 41 lots did not receive any bids and 29 did not meet their reserve (very few lots had reserves as my philosophy is basically to let it all go!!)"

Bruce Edwards reports the following sales results from Quasars recent auction:

Marvel - Amazing Spider-Man #6 VG $112, #9 GD+ $40,#149 FN $16; Avengers #6 VG $30,#9 VG $25; Ghost Rider ('67) #1 VG $8; Marvel Super Heroes #12 VF- $20; Silver Surfer #1 FN $100; Strange Tales #178 GD+ $44; Tales of Suspense #18 FA $20,#41 GD+ $65,#49 VG- $35; Tales to Astonish #18 FA $20.

DC - Action #177 VG $52; Animal Antics #1 VF $105; Batman #6 VG $425, #100 GD+ $179; Brave & Bold #28 FR $80, #38 VG $26; Flash #105 FR $85, #111 VF $250,#117 GD $18,#122 FN $40; Green Lantern #1 VG- $180; Justice League of America #20 GD $15, #46 VG $15; Showcase #32 FA $10,#38 GD+ $15; Spectre #1 NM $150; Strange Adventures #11 GD $22; Superboy #74 VG+ $14,#89 FN $31; Superman #39 FR $41,#62 GD $51,#136 VG+ $18; Superman's Girl Friend, LL. #6 VG $45, #13 VG+ $25; World's Finest #44 VG $74.

EC - Haunt of Fear #17 FN- $63,#19 GD+ $37,#24 FN $37,#26 VG+ $37,#27 FN+ $45, #28 VG+ $24; Panic #1 VG+ $47,VG $27; ShockSuspenstories #3 FN $61, #4 FN $62, #5 VF $84, #7 FN+ $93, #17 FN $32; Vault of Horror #25 FN- $100,#27 VG+ $47, #29 VG $47, #30 VG+ $58, #35 FN- $48, #36 VG $47, #37 FN $53; Weird Fantasy #15 VG $37, #16 FA $18, #18 FN- 52, #20 VG+ $68; Weird Science #15 VG+ $47, #18 VG $46, #19 VG+ $58.

Archie, Teen & Romance - Archie #16 FA $20; Cindy #31 FN $15; Cowgirl Romances #9 GD $11; Girl Romances #17 VG $11; Katy Keene #22 FN- $20; Popular Teen-Agers #13 GD $6; Romantic Western #1 VG $8; Secret Hearts #2 FN- $18, #2 FN- $9, #7 GD $11, #18 VG $11, #19 VG $11; Young Love #107 VF $42,#111 VG $16; Young Romance #198 GD $6, #201 VG $10, #203 GD $6.

Fanzines - Alter Ego #7 VF $40, #8 VG/FN; $8 CBM #3 FN *(Cont. on page 75)*

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 70

The following set of ten items represent the complete set of characters and each is inscribed on the curl "Copyright 1948 Fawcett Publications, Inc." Each tin litho button is 13/16" with a color portrait of the character on a white background. Captain Marvel (a few tiny letters of the curl inscription show on the top left edge) o/w Exc. $163; Mary Marvel (paint is NM but design is off about 1/16") $101; Captain Marvel, Jr. Exc. $183; Billy Batson Exc. $156; Hoppy the Marvel Bunny Exc. $90; Radar Exc. $56; Nyoka VF $56; Bulletman VF $69; Golden Arrow VG $51; and Ibis VF $138.

Rings - Superman Crusader Kellogg's Premium Ring silvered brass w/large image of Superman. Condition is very fine $133.

ALAN BAHR • HEROES
469 UNIVERSITY AVE
PALO ALTO, CA 94301
650•321•5370
Terribahr@aol.com

As for my take on SuperCon - My sales were very high despite what seemed to me to be low customer turn out. (It may have been because I filled six tables with low to mid grade Gold and Silver at half Overstreet.) I enjoyed a better per day sales ratio than at any other show this year (keeping in mind that I did not display at S.D. this year). The best selling category (and a bit of a shock to me) was low grade Golden Age funny animal and kids' books (WDC&S, Little Lulu, Bugs Bunny, etc.). I started with nine magazine boxes stuffed with books averaging GD to VG, priced at Overstreet and discounted 50%. After two days, all that remained fit easily into one magazine box. So... there are readers out there, and they're hungry for low grade, affordable comics! A gripe I have was that about 25% of the advertised artists didn't show up at all, and another 25% didn't come back on Sunday! I think artists owe it to their fans to at least show up, even if the show is perceived by them to be a disappointment!

Golden Age Sales - Exciting Comics #28 VF- $500; Fighting Yank #21 NM- $700,#23 VG $250; Space Adventures #13 VF $100; Superman #87 VF $250; Thing #12 VF $650; Thing #17 FN+ $50, VF- $135; Thrilling Comics #49 NM Mile High $1100; Weird Comics #4 VF $350.

(Cont. on page 74)

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#87 VG- .. ..$78.....73%
#231 VG.... .....$40.. ....95%
#15 GD... ....$354.....84%
#303 GD.....$4.....1.6X

Adventure
#72 VG..... .....$851.....47%
#173 GD..... ....$31.....86%
#247 GD.....$402.. ..1.34X
#282 VG ... .$30.....93%
#302 FN .....$26.....1.15X

All-Star
#38 FN .....$350.....75%
#43 NM/MT...$1,190 . ..1.4X
#43 VG- .....$150.. ... 80%
#11 FN .....$765....Guide

Amazing Spider-Man
#5 VF.....$850..... .94%
#5 FN... ... .$248.....69%
#10 VG+ .....$190.....1.44X
#10 FN .....$260.. ..1.31X
#39 VG ....$33.....85%
#45 VF... .....$65.....1.18X
#47 VF- .....$25..... 45%
#50 NM. ... .$89.....1.04X
#50 FN+ .....$77.....73%
#50 FN . ...$77.....48%

Archie
#16 FN+. .... $216.....1.5X
#18 VF- .....$240.....83%

Atom
#1 FN.....$110.....59%

Atomic Mouse
#1 VG.....$23..... .43%

Authentic Police Cases
#33 VG- .....$17....Guide

Avengers
#7 FN.....$70..... 1.3
#10 VF- ....$37.....36%
#14 VF.....$28... ..37%

Batman
#2 GD.....$900.....90%
#18 VG- ..... .$300.....77%
#25 VG.....$207... ...60%
#58 GD.... .....$78.....1.13X
#171 GD.. . .. ..$50.....1.28X

Black Terror
#21 FN.. .. ..$91.....84%

Boy Comics
#20 FN.....$50.....56%

Brave & Bold
#28 GD.... .. ....$330. ....92%

#29 GD.....$100.....59%
#30 VF.....$780.....74%
#34 NM.....$1,500.....83%
#63 VF.....$25.....96%

Candy
#1 FN.....$52.....58%

Captain America
#41 VF- .....$590.....77%

Captain Marvel Adv.
#40 GD.....$28.....80%
#61 FN- .....$33.....44%

Captain Marvel, Jr.
#17 FN .....$133....Guide

Catman
#V3#13 FR.....$47.....2.4X

Charlie McCarthy
#1 VG.....$30....Guide

DC Special
#3 VF.....$15.....77%
#18 VF+ .....$9.....2.5X
#21 NM.....$9.....75%

Detective
#40 FR+ .....$450.....1.41X
#41 FN+.....$851.....1.05X
#43 FN- . .....$402.....0.69
#56 VG+ .....$151.....63%
#88 FN .....$212.....94%
#107 VG+ .....$105.....86%
#122 VG+ .....$242.....1.14X
#189 VG+ .....$120.....1.43X
#202 VG- .....$90.....1.07X
#225 VG- .....$430.....62%
#225 VG+ .....$825.....1.32X
#294 VG.....$18.....79%
#310 GD.....$10.....1.5X
#310 VG.....$15.....1.15X

80-Page Giant
#1 GD.....$45.....1.3X
#8 VF+ .....$300.....1.29X

Fantastic Four
#1 VF.....$8,165.....1.09X
#1 FR .....$402.....97%
#2 NM.....$2,200.....65%
#2 FN- .....$512.....70%
#4 FR .....$100.....87%
#5 GD.....$300.....1.35X
#45 VG+ .....$18.....1.38X
#47 VG.....$13.....1.08X
#48 GD+ .....$75.....1.05X
#48 VF.....$600.....1.13X
#48 FN .....$121.....57%
#48 VF.....$336.....63%

Four Color
#1260 GD+ (Annette)
.....$31 .....2.8x
#305 VG (W.Woodpecker) ...
.....$5..... 76%
#882 VG+ (Zorro)$16 ....50%
#56 GD (Dick Tracy)
....$35.... 1.13X
#596 FN (Turok)$250....1.47X
#998 VG (Rick Nelson)
....$40.....1.27X

Green Lantern
#4 VG- .....$70.....1.13X
#6 VF.....$190... ...90%

Hawkman
#1 VF.. ....$150.....45%
#1 FN..... . . .$99. . ...75%
#3 VF.....$75.....96%

Henry
#5 FR ....$3.....1.51X

Hit
#5 VG+ ... .$810....Guide
#13 VG..... . ... $146 . ...78%
#24 VG..... . ... $130.....80%

House of Secrets
#66 FN+ .. ..$24.....94%
#92 FN+ .....$146 . .. 95%

Human Torch
#4 VG.. ....$523.....79%
#15 VF- .....$1,331.....1.66X
#38 GD .....$80.....1.06X

Incredible Hulk
#1 VG- .....$660.....51%
#6 GD+ .....$200.....1.27X
#6 FN+ .....$454.....96%
#6 FR .....$47 .....54%
#102 VG+ .....$55.....1.83X
#102 FN+ .....$45.. .Guide

Intimate Confessions
#1 GD+ ..... .$45. . .78%

Is This Tomorrow?
#nn VF.....$100.....1.1X

Jumbo
#19 GD.....$50..... ...78%
#44 VG- .. ..$60.....83%
#106 FN- .....$28... ...74%

JLA
#1 FR ....$175.....1.59X
#2 VG.....$175.....1.41X
#7 VF+ ... .$138.....77%
#21 VG. . . . .$60.....97%
#55 VF- .. . .$20.....63%

Konga
#2 VF- .....$45.....63%
#3 VG.... . . ..$16.....94%

#15 FN.....$15.....83%

Krazy Komics
#23 VF.....$26.....60%

Lawbreakers Always Lose
#10 GD.....$10.....1.11X

More Fun
#98 FN .....$220.....98%

Mr. District Attorney
#3 GD- .....$17.....43%

Murderous Gangsters
#1 VG- .....$40.....57%

Mystery in Space
#53 VG- .....$110.....41%

Mystic
#1 VG.....$322.....2.35X

Namora
#3 Fr.....$105.....1.80X

Nick Fury
#1 VF.....$37.....95%

Our Army at War
#1 VG+ .....$275....Guide
#82 VG+ .....$82.....91%

Out of this World
#12 VG.....$18.....55%

Phantom Lady
#17 VF.....$2,000.....76%

Phantom Stranger
#6 VG.....$235.....1.3X

Planet
#49 FN .....$110.....73%
#53 FN- ....$257.....1.71X
#58 VF.....$176.....1.17X
#67 FN .....$121.....1.12X

Roy Rogers
#28 VG- .....$16.....1.1X
#46 VF.....$35.....84%

Rulah
#18 FN .....$133.....82%
#25 FN .....$124.....1.03X

Sensation
#20 FN .....$225....Guide
#39 FN .....$117....Guide
#49 F-.....$100.....93%
#106 F .....$110 ....1.04X

Shock Suspenstories
#14 FR .....$15.....1.51X
#16 FR .....$15.....1.60X

Showcase
#4 VG+ .....$1,760.....80%
#13 VG.....$367.....64%
#24 FR ... .$100.....1.6X
#35 VF.....$266.....59%

Silver Surfer
#4 VG.....$40.....55%
#14 VF... .....$50.....1.09X

Strange Adventures
#4 VG+ .....$212.....1.41X
#117 FN .....$93.....67%

Superman
#11 GD..... .$167.. Guide
#32 GD.....$85.....1.02X
#43 GD . ...$44 ... ..70%
#140 FN .....$55.....1.1X

Tales of Suspense
#8 FN.....$107.....1.15X
#39 FN+ . .. ...$793. ...1.05X
#43 VG.....$36.....58%

Tales to Astonish
#2 VG. .....$67.....67%
#32 VG+ ... . $32... ..94%

Thrilling
#25 GD.....$25.....69%
#42 VF .....$92.....72%

Vault of Horror
#38 VG .....$42.....1.05X
#39 VG.....$42.....1.05X

Wonder Woman
#33 App.FN.....$150.....1.06X
#72 VG ... .$55.... 1.38X

Wonderworld
#7 VF ....$3,200.....3X
#7 NM (MH) .$6,400.....4X
#8 NM (MH) .$6,400.... . 4X
#8 FN+ (Nova Scotia)
.....$3,200.... ... 6X
#9 NM- (Larson)
.....$2,500..... ... 2X
#9 NM (MH) .$5,000.....4X
#11 NM (MH)$4,000 ... . 4X

X-Men
#1 VG+ ....$534.....73%
#6 GD..... ... $30.....1.03X
#58 NM-.....$51.....56%
#94 VF..... .$222.....83%
#94 FN .....$121.....1.06X

Young Allies
#1 VG+ .....$1,948.....1.02X

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 72

Silver Age Sales -Avengers #1 FN+ $650; B&B #28 GD $200,#29 FN+ $675; FF #48 NM/MT $950; Green Lantern #1 FR/GD $150; JLA #1 GD $100; Showcase #9 FR $250,#10 GD $175, #22 GD $300; Superman #109 FN+ $100; DC Comics Multi-pack (still sealed) containing Showcase #38, Aquaman #3, Action #288, and Adventure #296 all NM $600 the set.

Bronze Age Sales - Batman #232 NM- $70; DC 100 PG Super Spectacular #20 (Batman) NM $35; Hulk #181 NM- $425, #180, 181, and 182 NM/MT set $600; JLA #94 NM $75; Shanna #1 NM $10; Supergirl #1 NM $24; Superman-vs-Muhammed Ali Treasury NM $25; Werewolf by Night #1 NM $40; Thunda #1 (1973) NM $50; Untamed Love (1973) NM $50.

BILL ALEXANDER

PO BOX 61582
SUNNYVALE, CA 94088
408•733•4412

Scarce and obscure books appear to be the driving force in the Bronze Age market. DCs from the early '70s seem to be in a class of their own... and Marvel follows not too far behind. A high grade run of Li'l Kids or Li'l Pals or even Harvey titles are seemingly impossible nowadays. Those books for the most part can be found in no better than low to mid grade.

As most have discovered, Charlton books (and others) fresh from the newsstands from the early '70s were no better than VF condition due to the cheap cereal box-type paper used on many of their issues. Love and Romance #1, For Lovers Only #60 (Aug 1971-formerly Hollywood Romance) and Haunted Love #1 are extremely tough to locate in high grade. Many Charlton books are still a bargain!

Here, books that were once hot, now are not including Giant Size X-Men #1 and House of Secrets #92. I've had these books in NM and priced below Guide... and they sit! Many of the Marvel Giant-Size series are tough to find in high grade. Maybe the hardest to locate is Giant Size Kid Colt #1.

A few recent sales - All Star Western #10 VF+ $150; For Lovers Only #6 GD+ $25; Star Spangled War Stories #151 NM $200, #154 NM $110; Super DC Giants S-13 (Binky) VG #40, S-19 (Jerry Lewis) VG $40; Three Mouseketeers #1 VG+ $35; Weird Mystery Tales #1 NM $50; Weird Western Tales #12 NM $75.

RICK LOWELL • CASABLANCA COMICS

151 MIDDLE STREET
PORTLAND, ME 04101
207•780•1676
rick@casablancacomics.com

Recent sales include - Amazing Spider-Man #1 GD/VG-$1,500 small piece of tape on cover.

Lev Gleason's file copies of four titles in 1952 bound into one oversize hardcover volume. The book is over 3 inches thick. The four titles are "Lover's Lane" issues #20-30, "Boy Loves Girl" #19-29, "Black Diamond Western" #30-41 and "Uncle Charlies Fables" #1-5. The comics themselves are all in excellent shape (VF or better) with slight tanning on the edges of the inside covers. The front cover of the book has the name "Leverett S. Gleason" in gold lettering and the spine has "Lev Gleason Publications" and the four titles plus the year 1952 in gold lettering. The comics are still well bound and not loose at all. Sold for $111.50 in auction on ebay.

Original Art - Jack Kirby FF #57, Page 19-$1,400 (although I had a cash offer of $2,500 after the sale! Dang!). Kurt Schomburg painting of a sci-fi cover for $650. Alex Schomburg "Tunnel In The Sky Cover Painting" 6.5" x 4.25" $650.

MARK HASPEL • COMICS ON PARADE INC.

1105 E HALLANDALE BEACH BLVD
HALLANDALE, FL 33009
305•935•9981
comxparade@aol.com

I run a Golden Age mail order/auction/convention business named Comics on Parade Inc. I have 3 to 4 full page auctions a year, and I've done 16 conventions in the past year including San Diego, Chicago, Atlanta, New York, Hartford, Orlando, Charlotte, Sotheby's Auction, Christie's Auction. I discovered the Spokane Collection in early January 1998, and was the first person on the scene and left with 181 of the total 1020 Spokane books. Anyone who has had the opportunity to see these books have marveled at the exceptional page quality and cover reflectivity...truly a fabulous set of books! In the last six months I have sold over 125 volumes of Marve Masterworks and carry a stock of about 75 of them at all times.

Recent Sales include - Adventure #431 NM $40; All-American #29 VG+ $290; All-Winners #12 VG $300; Batman #10 GD+ $295; Beware #10 VF+ (BH copy) $900; Captain America #27 FN- $450; #37 VF $1350, #7 FN/VF $2400; Captain Midnight #15 (PA copy) $425; Crime Does Not Pay #33 FN $200; DC 100 PG #5 FN/VF $425, #5 GD/VG $200, #5 VF $500; Exciting #39 G/VG $95.

Fight Against Crime #16 VF $100; Flash #17 VG+ $325; GI Combat #87 VG/FN $300; Green Lantern #1 VG+ $3700 (to a dealer that sold it for $5000 less than a day later), #3 VG (c.t.) $500; Horrific #3 VG- $180, #7 VF $300, #33 VF- (Spokane) $600; Human Torch #16 FN/VF $650; Marvel Mystery #18 FN+ $450; Menace #1 VF- $600; Mr. Mystery #13 GD $85, #18 VG- $240, #19 VG $60; Mysterious Adventures #15 GD $60, #15 VG/FN $130, #20 VF $300; Mystic #1 VF+ $600; NYWF 1940 GD/VG $1200.

Space Western #44 (Bethlehem Copy) VF/NM $400; Speed #28 VG $140; Startling Terror Tales #11 NM (Spokane) $1500,#11 VG+ $385; Strange Suspense Stories #22 VF/NM $200; Sub-Mariner #5 NM $2000, #6 FR/GD $140; Super DC Giant S-17 NM $275, S-21 NM $275; Thing #14 FR/GD $60, #15 GD $125; Venus #17 GD- $65; Weird Mysteries #2 FN/VF $485; Weird Tales of the Future #2 NM (Spokane) $2000, #7 NM (Spokane) $1200, #8 F (Spokane) $800; Weird Terror #6 VF/NM $420; Witchcraft #5 VG/FN $264.

MATT NELSON • CLASSIC CONSERVATIONS

PO BOX 2335
SLIDELL, LA 70459
504•639•0621
spectre52@aol.com

Everything is selling across the board for me, due mainly to the relatively untapped internet market out there (whoops, cat's out of the bag!). If you're willing to move mainstream Golden Age for a little under guide, then ebay auction is for you. Nearly anything sells on there, for very little cost.

Golden Age Sales - Shield Wizard #4 VG $175; Sure Fire #3 FA+ $56; Black Terror #10 FN- $105, #11 $90; More Fun #60 restored FN $400, #70 VG $293; All-Select #2 GD+ $225; Exciting #27 GD/VG $75; Whiz #6 VG $275; World's Finest #6 GD/VG $200, #9 VG $250; Mystery #2 FA $45; Superman #2 coverless $200; Captain Midnight #26 VG/FN $35; Weird #1 coverless $40; Pep #58 FN+ $50; More Fun #68 GD+ $200; Pep #46 VG- $60, #50 VG/FN $75. *(Cont. on page 76)*

$85, #4 FN $30; Golden Age Collector #3 FN+ $10; R. Crumb Checklist nn VF $20; San Diego ComicCon 1973 nn FN $30; Squa Tront #7 FN/VF $15; Witzend #2 VG/FN $25, #3 VG/FN $20, #4 VG/FN $20, #5 VG/FN $30, #6 VG/FN $20, #7 VG+ $15, #8 VG+ $15, #9 VG+ $10.

The Howard Lowery Gallery completed another successful auction event in mid October. Sales that were realized included: Adventure #103 GD $172; Amazing Fantasy #15 VG $1150; Amazing Spider-Man #1 VG+ $975, #2 VF+ $1092, #3 VF $747, #14 VF+ $805; Animal Comics #1-30 (bound volume) FN 1840; Avengers #4 VF $258; Captain America #100 FN+ $57; Mystery in Space #1 VG+ 287; Our Gang Comics #1-12 (bound volume) FN $2070; Superman #1 App. FN/FN- $11,500, #57 GD $46, #146 VF 80; WD Comics & Stories #1-12 (bound volume) VG/FN $4140.

Original art - Alex Schomberg pen and ink re-creation "Sub-Mariner" (1985)VF+ $1,150; Burne Hogarth Tarzan Sunday page India ink & watercolor (2/2/1941) VF+ $6,210; Carl Barks ½ page from "Silent Night" (1945) VF $14,375; Charles Schulz Peanuts Sunday page (2/26/1961) VF $5,750; Daan Jippes original cover art from Mickey Mouse #231, #233,#237 (Gladstone - 1987) VF+ $345 each; Floyd Gottfredson Mickey Mouse daily (4/14/1937) "In Search of Jungle Treasure" VG $1,380; George Herriman "Krazy Kat: Happy Birthday" (1938) VF+$6,037; Walt Kelly Pogo daily (1/20/1961) VF+ $862; Winsor McKay "Dream of the Rarebit Fiend" (1906) Sunday page VF $1265.

One of the advantages of going to a Lowery's or Sotheby's auction is the ability to inspect the goods and verify the grading. Sotheby's and Christie's have used the services of the American Association of Comicbook Collectors (AACC) and their Authenticity, Certification and Grading Committee (ACG) to insure a fair and accurate grading from a team of qualified members.

With phone auctions, the grading is left up to the one person trying to sell his goods at the best possible price.

Of course, grading is an art... not a science. So, isn't it about time that we take another look at exactly how grading is determined? In 1992, Carter & Overstreet published The Overstreet Comicbook Grading Guide. They made a "valiant" attempt to quantify the grading process however, the photographic technology available at the time was, at best, crude, which in turn prevented clear pictures describing individual grades from being reproduced in the book. Today's enhanced computer scanning capabilities offer a brand new opportunity to issue a second edition of the Grading Guide. A full color representation of comics and their inherent flaws is needed for present and future collectors.

Along with an updated and revised edition Grading Guide, I think it's also time to receive input from collectors, hobbyists and dealers concerning the 100 point grading system that is currently in use. There have been recent rumors and rumblings in the hobby that Overstreet is changing to a 10 point system and realigning the existing nomenclature grades to new numbers.

Also the hobby is awash with rumors that an outside grading service (run by non-comicbook collecting individuals) will soon wade in.

Will the new system utilize split (combination) grades? What numeric values do we give the "whole" grades? Do we use a 70 point system (like the coin world), or a simplified 10 point system? Are we going to "slab" (encase) books, like the coin-guys? Some have even suggested that we use different OWL standards for different publishers (because they used different quality newsprint). Many in fandom already have questions about how the new approach to grading will eventually shake out.

The hobby needs everyone's input. Perhaps CBM and CBG can serve as forums for the discussion (debate?) on alternative grading systems. Without the participation from all the varied collecting interests in the hobby, we run the risk of the few controlling the many. No hobby can flourish and grow if it allows itself to be controlled by a very small special interest group... a special interest group that may or may not have the best interest of the hobby as their highest priority.

Now is the time for all concerned collectors to step up to the plate (whether pro or con), write to CBM Forum, and voice your opinion!

Marketplace Forecast

1970's Marvels are still a puzzle... other than first issues/first appearances that are in NM condition, runs of these books are always available in high grade at half price. Atlas/Seaboard continue to be moribund. .is there really an issue of Savage Combat Tales #3? I wonder how this company flopped with the talent such as Ditko,Wood and Adams? 1970's cover art and selected interior pages are particularly attractive these days. Try finding some Kirby Fourth World pieces. Post-boomer collectors are hitting their earning years and looking to invest in "their" Golden Age of comic memorabilia.

Famous Monsters, Creepy, Vampy and Eerie runs have been selling at shows, and buyers don't seem to be that concerned with condition.

Looks like we North American readers will be without any Disney products in the very near future. While stateside sales border around 6-7 thousand per month for the Uncle Scrooge and Walt Disney's Comics and Stories titles, Egmont (Disney's European licensee) has sales of over one million issues per week on some of their Disney titles.

Golden Age goodies priced under $200 (and under Guide) continue to sell like gangbusters! My guess is that the mainline DC Golden Age titles (Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, World's Finest) might bounce back again to their GD and FN prices despite last year's mostly arbitrary across the board dilution of values. Some dealers are still smarting from last year's reductions... some claim that many issues were selling at the old rate with no problems. What has been your experience? Lemme know!

Silver Age sci fi and mystery books, especially the six DC titles, are still in very high demand... not only for their out-of-this-world cover art but, for the fine work of the likes of Murphy Anderson and John Broome. Don't look for a slow-down here in demand or price. 'Til next time! ■

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Silver Age Comeback Continues

While the rumor mill is filled with specualtion on the newly proposed 10 point grading system and slabbing service, collectors ponder just what this might mean to their hobby. Also they are wondering what this new "grading service" holds in store. What the market really wants to know is how much of an influence will these evolutions have on pricing, value, and availability.

Golden Age

Did Steve Geppi's ads for Mile Highs work? They certainly brought out quite a few books for sale in the past two months. Low grade Timely still finds a home quickly, and Black Terrors and Fighting Yanks move fast.

Recent Sales: Jingle Jangle Comics #1 VF $350; Joker Comics #11 AppVF $110 ; Krim Ko Komics #3 VG $25; Marvel Mystery #32 FN/FN- $290; Mary Marvel #1 VG $265; Master #13 FN $480; More Fun #61 GD $190;Pep Comics #1 GD $595; Red Ryder #1 FN $850; Santa Claus Funnies #1 FN+ $140; Silver Streak #2 VG $440.

Atomic Age

As prices begin to firm up on pre-Code horror, more deals move "underground" and this material becomes more difficult to find. Everyone still wants Matt Baker. Pre-Code crime, wild Westerns, Good Girl, are all consistently asked for.

Recent Sales: Canteen Kate #2 FN $140; Diary Loves #6 VF $46; Diary Secrets #19 FN $62; Durango Kid #1 FN $210; Famous Funnies #151 NM $70; Glamorous Romances #82 VF $60; Jack Armstrong #1 GD+ $85; Jet Aces #2 NM $125; Nellie #9 VF/NM $145; Perfect Crime #12 VF $80; Romantic Secrets #8 VF/NM $70.

Silver Age

The comeback continues as more collectors begin to migrate back to Silver. High grade is still the name of the game, yet that trend might be changing very soon. Lower grades are beginning to sell quite well at less and less of a discount, with DC leading the way just slightly ahead of Marvel. Late 1960's DC and Marvel are selling extremely well in VF or better, as these books are still seen as undervalued.

Recent sales: 80 pg Giant #8 VF $250, #7 VF $210; Captain America #100 VF/NM $180; Daredevil #2 FN $100; Fantastic Four #5 VG $345; Flash #106 FN $295; Four Color #1115 (Ricky Nelson-photo-c) VF $110,#1242 (King Leonardo)VF $40; Green Lantern #1 GD $245, #59 NM- $180; Jesse James #20 FN $45; Nick Fury #1 NM $85; Rawhide Kid #23 VF $110.

Bronze Age

One title—Super DC Giants. This run really drives the market right now, with everyone paying multiples of Guide for any grade for issues #13-#23. DC Super Spectaculars are still very popular in high grade. Issues #4-7, #15, #16 and #20 are still the most popular. Find a Marvel Spotlight #2 & #3 in VF/NM or better and the multiples begin. Marvel Horror titles are growing rapidly in popularity, yet haven't quite caught up with the red hot DC Gothic/Romance books. Charlton and Gold Keys have gained in popularity with the "oddities" and tougher to locate issues in grade being difficult to find.

Recent sales: Avengers #100 VF/NM $42; Brave & Bold #113 NM $22; Daredevil #81 MT $45; DC Super Spectacular #6 VF $80; Doomsday +1 #1 NM $7; Marvel Spotlight #4 NM $48; Marvel Spotlight #6 NM $50; Red Wolf #1 NM $14; Sgt Rock #302 VF/NM $30,#275 NM $40; Showcase #90 NM $11; Super DC Giant S-15 FN $65; The Cat #1 NM $11; Weird War #2 VF $45; Where Monsters Dwell #1 NM $32.

Where will the new grading system take us in regards to pricing? Switching from letters to numbers is merely a label, but the feedback that I've been hearing is that collectors are worried that the pricing spreads will once again be shifted... and not in their favor! Paranoid? Perhaps, but then again, there is precedent. Many collectors believe that the price spreads should be broader, but there is that unheard majority of collectors whose book's valuations might be affected negatively by such a move. Will they weigh in with their opinion, or just keep silent? ■

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 74

Atom Age Sales - Catman #30 VG $137; Brick Bradford #6 FN/VF $75 (a beautiful copy of a fantastic Schomburg cover); Detective #188 VG $90; Jest #11 VG+ $30; Black Magic #2/4 GD/VG $30.

Silver Age Sales - (Silver Age does not do as well as Golden Age on ebay for me. Many times common issues and inferior grades will bring only a fraction of guide, but some books do prevail. People just tend to be a bit more picky.) X-men #1 GD $375; Detective #225 FA/GD $250; Flash #105 FA/GD $250; Brave and Bold #28 FA/GD $200, #34 VG $300; Justice League #1 FA/GD $150; Batman #100 GD+ $200; Adventure #247 FA $200; Tales of Suspense #39 VG $500; Tales To Astonish #27 FA $150; Fantastic Four #1 FA $350, #2 FA/PR $75; Tales To Astonish #35 FN/VF $300; Tales of Suspense #32 VG $32; Spider-Man #28 VF+ $175.

Bronze Sales - Phantom Stranger #1 VG/FN $15, #11,15,17-20 NM set $20, #21-24,26-28,31 NM set $40; Ghosts #1 FN+ $30; Mister Miracle #2-10 FN set $25; Kamandi #1-10 NM set $41; Spider-Man #121 FN/VF $36; Hulk #181 (1st Wolvie, ready for a shock?) FR $60, Hulk #181 FN- $145.

TED VAN LIEW • SUPERWORLD
57 SOUTH FLAGG STREET
WORCESTER, MA 01602
508•754•0792
tvanliew@aol.com

Good Golden Age books sell in all grades, although books priced over $500 are selling more slowly. Silver Age Marvels in NM sell faster here than a light beam, and subsequently lower grades sell eventually but unpredictably. There is an unfortunate obsession with NM books for investment, and so many others get overlooked.

Silver DC's in NM sell quickly too, but not as quickly as Marvels, even though they' re much harder to find. I guess the Marvelites greatly outnumber the DCers.

The '70s is such a vast, virtually untapped pool right now. I think people are discovering new cool stuff as they go along (I sure am!). It seems that certain key books are leading the way, but a lot of guys are filling in or upgrading their runs on various titles.

Here is a listing of some recent sales that

will be of interest: Adventure #299 NM $75; Batman #7 GD/VG $335; Crime Suspensestories #3 VF+ $250; Detective #135 FN+ $250; Flash Comics #86 GD/VG $385; Green Lantern #76 NM $225; Men's Adventures #27 GD/VG $155; Star Ranger #1 FN/VF $785; Super DC Giant #17 NM (Love) $225, #19 NM (Unexpected) $75, #21 NM (Love) $250, #23 NM (House Of Mystery) $75; Weird Fantasy #10 VF+ (tiny trim) $100; X-Men #1 GD+ $350.

JAMIE HEWBOLD • SO CAL COMICS & COLL

8280 CLAIREMONT MESA BLVD #124
SAN DIEGO, CA 92111
619•715•8669

We had a great sale of back issues... mostly Gold, Silver & Bronze! We recently purchased a collection of comics from the '40s to the '90s, including fanzines, adult books and magazines... all from the original owner. Items included a stack of pre-Code horror, sci-fi comics and "good girl" comics, a FULL set of Warren Vampirella (issues #1-#113); 70 Fiction House titles and a set of Witzend mags #1-#10. Also in this bunch was a Reform School Girl that the owner picked up right off the newsstand. Also Adams' Bronze Age work continues to be popular here.

Golden Age/Atom Age Sales - Crime Illustrated #1 GD $12; Terror Illustrated #2 GD+ $15; Hand of Fate #21 GD $13; Weird Adventures #1 GD $40; Out of the Shadows #9 GD $20, #14 GD $20; Nightmare #13 GD+ $20; Fox Giant Truth About Crime FA/GD $75; Green Hornet #25 VG+ $108.

Silver Age Sales - Strange Tales #114 VG $60; Hawkman #4 VF $85; Tales of Suspense #39 FA $150; Amazing Spider-Man #28 VF $275; Mystery in Space #32 FN+ $100

Bronze Age Sales - Marvel Comics Super Special (Kiss #1 & #2)#1 NM $75; #5 $60; Superman vs. Muhammed Ali (treasury size) NM $25 (two copies).

JOEL THINGVALL • NOSTALGIA ZONE

3149½ HENNEPIN AVE S
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55406
612•822•2806
nostzone@spacestar.net

There is a lot of movement in '70 high grade comics. What used to be purchased for a couple of bucks a few years ago easily runs a minimum of $10 in NM... especially the Marvel and DC horror/mystery titles. Most 20¢ DC Giants go for $20-25 in high grade, and DC 100-pagers are topping at around $40 in NM (a couple of high-end exceptions here... romance and horror).

I'm curious about the surge in interest in fanzines from the '60s and the prozines of the early '70s. Seems that most are pricing from the $20 range just to start, no matter the condition. Unearthed lots of digests and treasury editions and movement has been good.

Sales - Adventures Into The Unknown #49 GD/VG $25; Amazing Spider-Man #13 GD/VG $80; Avengers #1 FN/VF $800; Batman #49 FR/GD $100; Bill Boyd Western #1 FN/VF $150; Bob Steel Western #1 VG/FN $100; Captain Marvel #44 FN/VF $80; Complete #2 VG/FN $350; Dark Mysteries #5 VG/FN $60; Detective #192 VG/FN $120, #197 GD/VG $75, #212 FN/VF $200; Doctor Solar #1 GD/VG $60; FF #5 FN/VF $1000; Flipper #1 VF/NM $40; Forbidden Worlds #22 GD/VG $25, #114 VG/FN $24; Jumbo #60 VG/FN $75; Jungle #3 FR/GD $70; Mystery In Space #53 VG/FN $175 Operation Peril #1 VG/FN $50; Sensation #113 GD/VG $45; Sgt. Fury #13 FN/VF $110; Showcase #16 PR/FR $80, #19 PR/FR $75; Spirit #3 VG/FN $50; Superman #86 FN/VF $180; Web of Evil #9 GD/VG $45; Witches Tale #20 VG/FN $50; World's Finest #65 VG/FN $150.

GREG WHITE • COMICS & COLLECTIBLES

17 WEST MONUMENT AVENUE
KISSIMMEE, FL 34741
407•239•0405
whizzer@phoenixat.com

Asutumn our sales have been respectible. The leveling of prices in 1998 has gone a long way to improve the back issue sale situation here. Books in all grades have seen reasonable movement this fall. DC, Timely/ Marvel are top sellers. WWII covers continue to be popular

Silver Age (1956-1968) - DC and Marvel have sold well lately. Lower grade books will move well if priced at a reasonable level. We have also moved some high grade issues. These don't sell as often due to the higher price point. Dell-Gold Key TV covers will sell if priced below guide. I have difficulty getting guide price on all funny animal and humor books. I feel the Overstreet price on these comics needs to be lowered by 40%. I just cannot get $250 for a NM Annette or Ricky Nelson cover. I also cannot get anywhere near guide price for Dell Giant comics. I love these books, however the price is not consistent with their true market value.

Recent Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #5 VG$150; Batman #171 FN $175; Brave & Bold #34 VG $195; Fantastic Four #5 VG $400; Hulk #4 good $95.

Golden Age - Not as much activity this month. Demand continues for the tough books to locate (Hitler covers, Lou Fine, Good Girl). These comics just don't come in too often. Batman will sell at a steady pace, however we have trouble moving Detective Comics after #50. I think that is a testament to how intimidating the Detective run can be. Disney and other funny animal and humor wi l sell from this period only if discounted.

Recent Sales: Manhunt #3 GD $30; National #38 FN $75; Superman #35 GD $60; Tessie #8 VG $35. Weird SciFi #27 VG $35.

Art, Toys, and Related Collectibles - We picked up a neat collection of vintage matchbook covers this month. It will be interesting to see how these sell. We also bought many late '60s early '70s Disney production cels. We have already moved a few of these. We also recently purchased a group of die cast toys. Sales on comic related items remain reasonable. Disneyana also has a strong market if the piece is priced at a fair level.

Recent Sales: Aristocats cel $250; Mickey animation drawing $75; Frazetta pen and ink drawing $2500, Superman/Flash race page $200.

VINCE ZURZOLO, JR. • VINCENT'S COLL.

424 BEACH 134TH STREET
BELLE HARVOR, NY 11694
718•318•2423
vincentcoll@earthlink.net

There's been continued interest in the Oakland collection. We had collectors drive up from Virginia just to purchase books from this collection. Super high grade mid '60s and early '70s Marvels and DCs are selling very well. Sales included: Where Creatures Roam #1 NM (Oakland) $50; Chamber of Darkness #1 NM- (Oakland) $70; Rawhide Kid #68 NM (Oakland) $25; Young Romance #154 NM $75; Green Lantern #86 NM (Oakland) $85.

Wonder Woman is one of the strongest selling Gold and Silver Age DC titles. Sales include: Wonder Woman #53 VG/FN $50, #99 VG $20, #30 VF $350, #21 GD- $45, #22 FR+ $40, #26 FR/GD $40, and a #14 (Rockford) VF/NM $425.

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 77

The lower grade Silver and Modern Age Archies sold well in discount boxes for $1 and $2 a piece. I also had a lot of luck with early '50s Archies and related titles. I look for this genre to grow in popularity over the next few years.

Cool '50s horror books sold well at the show. Sales include: The Thing#15 VF/NM $900 (the killer worm cover), #7 VF $575; and Teenage Dope Slaves VF/NM for $900.

I did very well with a recently acquired run of Magnus #11-28 File Copies, they sold for $700 approximately 1.5x guide. All were in NM with great pages and glossy covers.

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The Price Guide adjustment on mid to low grade Silver Age was met with mixed reaction here. I think it was justified in nearly all cases and it makes sense that if you have an inventory which is similar in grade and in issues to the next dealer and they aren't selling, then you've got to make the collector feel like he or she is getting a good deal. If you want a Silver Age key, you can get it with little or no effort. If you want it in high grade and have the money, then it shouldn't be too much of a hassle—they are available. If you're looking for extremely high grade non/minor-key issues, then good luck.

Golden Age - Everything seems to sells moderately well in most grades if priced right. I know I'm not the first (or last) to say this.

There are two main reasons... first, collectors are resistant to paying over Guide on non high-grade Golden Age books. Even with moderate pricing, collectors here (faced with diverse collecting trends and numerous options) usually opt for stacks of '50s, '60s or '70s material over accurately priced Golden Age books priced above the $750 mark.

Second, it seems that more and more people are coming to the realization that a complete a run of a major Golden Age title in the best grade affordable may require more than a second mortgage. Now the trend here is collecting a 'selection' of issues from that run, focusing on keys, artist(s) or classic covers.

Sales - Batman #3 appVG $675; Boy Commandos #1 GD+ $440; Captain America #31 appVG- $195; Mask #2 FN+ $1,200; Sensation #49 FN $72; Stuntman #1 VF+ $840; #58 VF+ $880; Wonder Woman #20 VF- $305.

Atom Age - One of the most in-demand periods in general, with high-grade material in extremely high demand here. Most requested are great Horror and Romance (especially Romance with Good Girl covers). In fact, with these, grade is less relevant—as most collectors know these items don't come around very often.

Sales: Claire Voyant #4 VF $375; Climax #1 FN- $35; Forbidden Love #3 GD- $22; Manhunt #1 VF $315; Mystery In Space #2 FN+ $420; #6 VF+ (Mile High) $1,425; #7 VF- $260.

Silver Age - Sales in this area remain about the same.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #9 NM- $915; Daredevil #1 FR/GD $91; Double Life of Private Strong #2 VF+ $285; Hulk #1 appGD+ $395; #4 FN+ $350; JLA #5 FN $72; Sgt. Fury #1 VF $680; Showcase #60 NM- $275, #70 VF+ $61; Silver Surfer #4 NM- $590; 80 PG Giant #8 FN $48.

Bronze Age - Also an in-demand period here, with many requests for extremely high grade issues with popular cover artists... i.e Kirby, Kubert, Wrightson, Adams, etc.

Prices realized from recent auctions and other sales are... Batman #227 VF+ $68; Brave & Bold #93 VF+ $54; DC 100 PG Spec. #21 NM- $89; Days of the Mob #1 FN- (w/poster) $45; Swamp Thing #1 VF+ $59.

Memorabilia & Art sales - Set of 3 bronze Marvel Medallions $200; 1960's Marvel Super Heroes Posters (set of 8) w/original envelope $484; Marvel Stationery Letter (March 1963) signed by Flo Steinberg $191; Comicdom #1 ('63 Fanzine) $85; Review #1 ('65 Fanzine) $44.

Original Art sales - Shadow by G. Pratt $542; Conan #1 pg. 2 by Barry Smith $1,560.

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

CBM MARKETWATCHERS

Bill Alexander
PO Box 61582
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408-733-4412

Alan Bahr
Heroes
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Jon Berk
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Vintage Investment Associates
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Southern Cal Comics & Coll.
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San Diego, CA 92111
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Richard Olson
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John Pires
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Continued from page 9

We should also note that this throwaway story arc was significant in that it centered on the murder of the Angel's parents, thus setting the stage for events several years later, most notably Warren Worthington's shedding of his secret identity and using a portion of his inheritance to finance the Champions, another quirky Marvel team.

Mike Wilbur, Maryland

Vintage Comic & Collectibles Show!

We wanted to publicly thank all those who took part in our first ever San Diego Vintage Comic and Collectibles Show on November 7, 1998. The comic dealers and collectors that we talked with indicated that they really enjoyed the day. Special thanks also go to Russ Heath who met with fans at his table, and also to Michael Naiman and Ye Editor for helpful suggestions about the show. With the continued support of everyone, we can make this a regular San Diego event. Thanks again everybody!

Jim & Steve Bilakovics, California

Gerber's RVI?

Didn't realize the Neal Adams interview in #56 was a reprint until after I bought and read the issue (Duh). I probably would have bought it anyway. I anticipate your reprint collection. Hoping it will be from issues I haven't seen. Also, perhaps you could print an article about the contents of CBM. I know little about volume one. Maybe covers and an index?

James M. Reynolds, Michigan

We are planing a complete CBM index and cover gallery to be published in a future issue... we'll keep you posted.

We are also excited about our upcoming CBM Special Edition. It reprints articles and columns from CBM #22-24, is our first perfect-bound (square-bound) CBM issue ever, and even has 120 pages instead of the standard 80.This "Best of CBM" Special Edition goes on sale in the spring.

Oh, one final thing... our first "annual" also contains the first set of four "Gerber white-space stickers." Since Gemstone owns the rights to the Gerber Guides, we have gotten permission to help collectors fill in all those Gerber white-spaces. I'm very excited about this and I hope you will be too.

Wayne's World!

My crush on comics began in the early '60s. Too late to truly appreciate Wayne Boring's work. But thanks in part to the writer(s), he illustrated some of my favorite stories: "The World that was Krypton's Twin" from Superman #119 (Feb 1958), and "Superman's Return to Krypton" from Superman #141 (Nov 1960), which I have only in coverless issues. In Superman #155 (Aug 1962), the cover story was "The Downfall of Superman" penciled by Curt Swan. But I felt the lead interior story was the greatest of the two: "Superman Under the Green Sun." Even though I have some of the original Superman Annuals, but not the first, I bought the recent $4.95 reprint solely because of the Wayne Boring reprints.

"The Lady and the Lion!" from Action #243 (Aug 1958) was also one of my favorites. It's dog-eared and torn, but when I was a kid, I was allowed so few comics a year that I read this one over and over. I see that Action #342 (Oct 1966) to 344, 346, and 348 to 353 (Aug 1967) still kept Wayne employed (he also did the cover on #353). But the panel layouts in #351-353 were terrible. Maybe "Wayne's World" was really in space, and not on planet Earth. P.S. Someday, I hope to read a reprint of Action #215 (Apr 1956) "The Superman of Tomorrow!" It looks like a "classic."

Tony Kowalik, Illinois

Marvel Fun And Games

Was wondering if your readers could answer a couple of questions for me. I just recently bought two copies of Marvel Fun And Games #3. I bought them both from the original owner, who originally purchased them from a convenience store here in town in 1979. They are slightly different from one another. Let me explain: One copy has a black rectangle with a white diamond inside of it. The price and issue number are both inside of the diamond shape, and are black in color. This issue has a bar code on the bottom left corner, with a line running through it.

The other copy has two square boxes connected to each other. The cover price is in one box, and the issue number is in the other box. The price and issue number are both red/orange in color. This one also has a bar code, but doesn't have a line running through it.

Anyway, I thank you in advance for taking the time to read my letter, and I hope someone will be able to shed some light on this for me.

By the way, I really love your magazine.

Joe Rodrigues, via E-mail

Tales of the Unexpected #24

CBM #64 was yet another great issue—and not just because it had my interview with Bill Schelly (loved those full-color fanzine covers!!)! As always, everything was fun to read… including a letter from fandom founder and very early fanzine publisher Par Holman! (Got any spare copies of Spotlite #1 for sale, Par?) By the way, I can't agree with Par on noting the value of FF #1 from the get-go. I also bought that issue off the stands and was completely mesmerized by it. It was worlds apart from anything DC was putting out, and of course, it had the return of the Torch, and its characters argued, for gosh sakes, just for starters. And the fact that they did not wear costumes, at least at first, I also found intriguing. That issue to me was a definite sign of things I hoped were to come from Marvel, which, of course, they delivered in spades in the months to follow, God bless 'em.

Of special interest in CBM #64, though, was Pat Calhoun's focus on Lou Cameron, whose art I have always admired. Talk about an unsung artist—he is virtually unknown today, but some of his lush, lavishly detailed stories for Ace were close to EC quality (in fact, there's a strong flavor of Reed Crandall in the page Pat used from his Ace work). This master of zip-a-tone shading drew an especially attractive woman, while his men looked quite heroic, in the style of actor Rod Taylor from his "Time Machine" days. In fact, Cameron's work on the Classics Illustrated version of that story I consider topnotch, and ditto his excellent Classics "War of the Worlds" (apparently I'm a bigger fan of his Classics work than Pat). The art on these two comics holds up very well even by my standards today.

I recalled as a child reading a beautifully-drawn Cameron story done for DC, and I must have searched for a copy of that thing for decades. Finally I found it in Tales of the Unexpected #24 (and he even drew his one and only DC cover for this issue). This ultra-rare DC work is gorgeous from first to last panel, and it makes me wonder, to this day, why he wasn't used more often by DC (he drew Tales in two other issues of TOTU). I've enclosed a sample of that story that I hope you'll run in a future CBM to show just how talented this guy was.

I was glad Pat mentioned that Cameron had a second and equally fruitful career as a paperback novelist. I have long meant to read some of those books (and own several). But with time at a premium (welcome to adulthood!), I always end up opting for his visual work in comics. Can you blame me? Anyway, what a thrill it was to have my interest in Cameron validated by this long overdue article. Way to go, Pat and CBM! This is exactly the sort of thing I read CBM for. Now how about a follow-up article on other unsung comic art heroes, like Arturo Cazeneuve, Sid Check or A. C. Hollingsworth?! If you won't write it, Pat, I guess I'll have to!

Jeff Gelb, California

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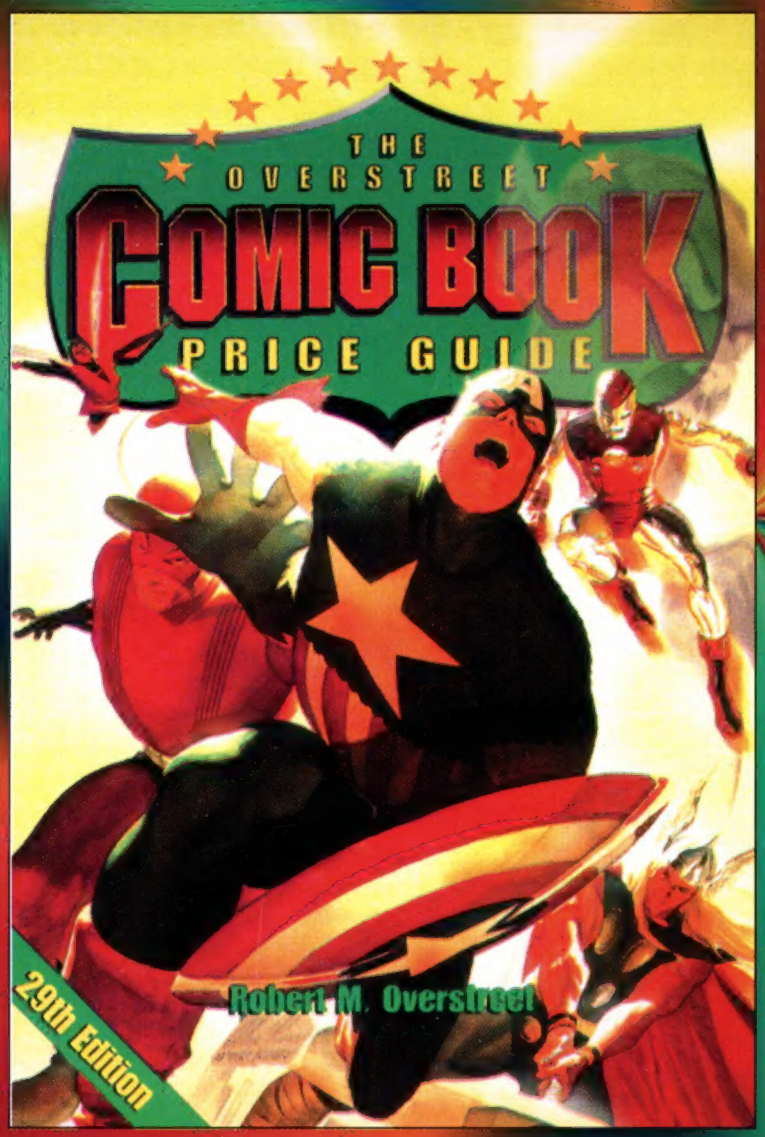

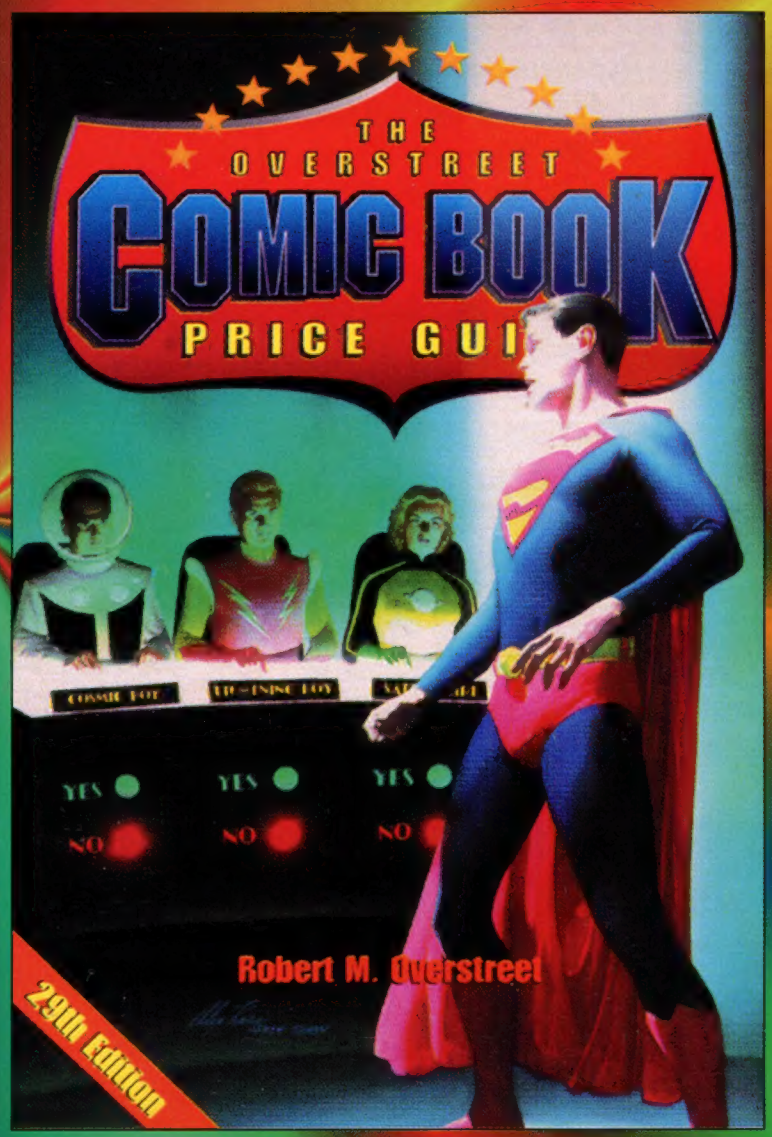

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